

# HOUSING

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## A NEW ATTACK ON THE SLUMS

### IN ENGLAND

The long-awaited Labor Government's plan for doing away with England's slums has finally appeared. In the latter part of March the Government's Housing Bill was introduced in Parliament.

We have difficulty in believing that the responsible sober-minded intelligence of England has seriously considered these proposals in all their implications.

We are frank to admit that the scheme seems most unsound. It is nothing more nor less than public charity on a gigantic scale, applied to the housing of the people of England—but public charity applied without much regard to the needs or condition of the people who are to be relieved. It violates every canon of sound and intelligent social work and reverts to the old discredited system of indiscriminate “out-door relief”. The only qualification necessary to insure receiving this relief is that one shall have been a slum dweller.

In its economic aspects it is most extraordinary. Under this scheme it is proposed that the taxpayers of England—including in that term those who pay taxes to the Central Government and to the local authorities—shall pay out of their pockets from their own earnings the sum of £600 (£15 a year for 40 years) so that a slum family may live in a house which with the land and improvements costs but £400! Neither the taxpayer nor the slum dweller will own these homes—even at the end of this period. They will be owned by the local authorities. And during all this period of 40 years the slum dwellers will have been forced to pay a rent which many of them will consider the very maximum that they can possibly pay.

It would certainly be more economical for the British tax-payer to get off his back this “Old Man of the Sea” once for all and let the Government build the houses and give them outright to the slum



families to have and to hold for the rest of their lives, with the proviso that they could not sell them. This would cost the tax-payers of England only £400, instead of the £600 that they must pay now—a saving of one-third.

The slum dweller would certainly like it; for, under the proposed scheme he will have to continue to pay rent for his house up to the maximum of his capacity. So far as he can see, the only benefit that he is going to get by this great burden on the tax-payers—a part of which he, among others, will have to pay—is the slight reduction in his rent of 2 shillings a week.

This aspect of the problem apparently has not had consideration by England's statesmen of any Party. It is, in effect, the method which the Socialist Government of Vienna has adopted in its housing programme. That city has built houses since the war to accommodate over 20,000 families. They have all been built out of current funds. The tax-payer pays for them, the occupants live practically rent free, paying a slight "maintenance charge" which does not exceed a few dollars a month.

We do not for a moment advocate any such scheme—nor any scheme of subsidized housing. They all seem to us inherently wrong. The American principle, to our mind, is far better. That principle is, that a man should stand on his own feet and by his own efforts supply all of his needs without help from Government; that if his wages are not sufficient to enable him to provide for his own maintenance and that of his family in decency, his wages should be increased to an amount that will make this possible, and that he should have a proper home, and decent living conditions—as well as proper food and proper clothing. Shelter in the last analysis is a commodity no different in any of its essentials from any other commodity. It is subject to the same economic laws.

America believes neither in subsidizing housing, in subsidizing rents, nor in subsidizing wages.

England may ultimately awake to a realization of the fact that an application of these principles to her own conditions may help her emerge from her present somewhat difficult industrial and economic situation.

There is one aspect of the Housing Bill which seems to have escaped public attention—and that is its social consequences.

In England, at the present time there are 1,750,000 people unemployed—supported by the taxpayers on the "Dole"—the population being too great for its present industrial needs.



## ENGLAND NEEDS BIRTH CONTROL—NOT SUBSIDIES FOR BABIES

What England needs at the present moment, more than anything else, is a well-conceived plan of birth-control. It seems rather extraordinary under these circumstances that the Government should put forth a scheme which puts a premium upon breeding children—and among those classes that it is least desirable to have perpetuated.

The Government's Housing Bill was introduced in Parliament the latter part of March. After a notable debate lasting three days the second reading of the Bill was agreed to by all Parties and the Money Resolution adopted. The Bill then took the usual course and was referred to a Standing Committee.

Through the months of May and June this Committee has been giving consideration to the Bill in detail, considering various amendments and giving it that scrutiny which is so important to a measure of this kind. At the time of going to press the Bill was still before the Committee. It will probably emerge at an early date and will undoubtedly be speedily enacted into law, as representatives of all Parties recognize that it is a sincere attempt to deal with a great social problem fraught with many difficulties. There is no desire on the part of the representatives of any political party to make political capital out of it.

While the Bill is a long one, comprising some 55 pages of print, and deals with all aspects of the housing problem, it holds great interest for our readers, for it is a well considered effort to cope with that most difficult problem—the problem of Slum Clearance. The Bill is by no means, however, limited to that one aspect of the housing question, but provides a new basis of subsidies to encourage the building of houses; and deals with reconditioning, with rural housing, and with practically every important aspect of housing, except the control of rents—a subject too laden with political dynamite to be lightly handled by a Party that holds its power by the slight margin that the Labor Government exists by.

Because of the fact that England is the one country that has done more in dealing with slum clearance than any other country in the world, and because also we in America are beginning to give some heed to this much neglected aspect of the housing problem, we feel sure that our readers will be interested in learning somewhat in detail about this new measure, which must be considered only as another step in a great movement carried on through a considerable period of years.



## WHAT THE BILL DOES

The Bill's chief features—especially those that may be said to mark departures from existing practice—may be summarized as follows:

It

(1) Distinguishes two kinds of Slum Areas—"Clearance Areas" and "Improvement Areas". Clearance Areas are those which are so bad that the only remedy is to destroy all the houses and clear the site. Improvement Areas are those where some houses are good and some bad, where some must be demolished, while others can be allowed to stand, and still others can be improved.

(2) Requires owners of buildings in Clearance Areas to demolish insanitary buildings at their own expense—thus overcoming the difficulty of dispossessing tenants under the Rent Laws, and clearing areas without expense to the local authorities.

(3) Permits the local authorities to purchase sites at private purchase—thus quickening the process.

(4) Allows the local authorities to condemn and clear slums without regard to their future use and to dispose of these sites in any way they wish, even selling them—thus overcoming the present disability pointed out by the highest court in the recent "Derby" Case.

(5) Authorizes the paying of "consequential damages"—compensating shop keepers for loss of trade and paying the cost of removing their business elsewhere.

(6) Proposes in "Improvement Areas" to destroy those houses that are too bad to be kept, to open up overcrowded parts of the area by cutting new streets, by widening streets, or by taking out individual buildings, and compels owners of the remaining houses to put and keep them in good condition.

(7) Provides more definitely for the reconditioning of individual houses that can be made fit for habitation, and quickens the process—which now often takes 18 months. It makes the County Court the appeal tribunal instead of the Ministry of Health.

(8) Authorizes the local authorities to make loans out of public funds to owners, payable by installments, to carry out such reconditioning.

(9) Where owners fail to make houses fit for occupancy, the local authorities are authorized to acquire the property, paying nothing for the house but only for the land.

(10) Provides "a state dowry for slum babies."

(11) Subsidizes rents by granting a subsidy from Government funds to the local authorities in the amount of 45 shillings (\$11.25) a year for 40 years for every person—including children and babies—removed from a slum and rehoused by the local authorities. It makes it a condition of such grant that the local authorities shall also pro-

vide a subsidy of £3 15s. (\$18.75) per *house* for a period of 60 years, to reduce the rents of such persons, and that the houses shall conform to government conditions as to standards of accommodation, sanitation and construction.

(12) In cities, where, the high cost of land—land costing £4,000 per acre or over—or where the necessity for workers to be near their work requires the building of block dwellings over 3 stories in height, this government subsidy is increased to 70 shillings (\$17.50) per person for 40 years.

(13) Encourages a scheme of “differential rents” and permits the local authorities to charge different rents to people receiving the same accommodations, fixing rents according to the tenants “ability to pay.”

(14) Provides for a review of all subsidies every 3 years.

(15) Encourages improvement in rural housing conditions by placing greater responsibility for them on County Councils and requires them to pay for 40 years a subsidy to the local authorities of £1 a year on houses built for agricultural workers.

(16) Recognizes that all persons do not need the same size house and permits smaller houses of 2 rooms for aged couples, spinsters and bachelors and others without children, to be built by the local authorities and still receive a government subsidy for 40 years of £5 per year for such houses.

(17) Requires every Borough and Urban District with over 20,000 population to make and submit to the Government a Complete Housing Programme to meet their needs, and to resubmit such a programme every 5 years.

#### WHAT THE BILL DOES *Not* Do

1. It leaves untouched the chief obstacle to Slum Clearance by continuing the existing inequitable method of paying nothing for sound buildings condemned in slum areas, paying only for the land—and that, at a reduced rate often below its market value.

2. It continues the other chief obstacle to Slum Clearance in retaining in the law the requirement that alternative housing accommodations at similar rent in the neighborhood must be provided before a slum can be cleared and the occupants of the slum houses displaced.

3. It continues in full force the Rent Control Laws—the chief obstacle to the resumption of house building on a large scale by private effort.

4. It does nothing to permit the replanning of built-up areas, without which power little effective slum clearance work can be done. It



is understood that a measure dealing with this aspect of the situation is promised for introduction at a later date.

5. It takes no steps to reduce the cost of building nor to prevent profiteering in building materials or labor, nor to prevent the large subsidy the Government proposes to pay being absorbed by the building trades, as it has been in the past, and undue and heavy burdens thereby imposed on the British tax-payers.

6. It overlooks entirely the great opportunity of decentralization, and the fostering of the Garden City movement.

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It is apparent from this summary of the Bill's main provisions that it is a comprehensive measure dealing with many phases of the housing problem, with particular emphasis on Slum Clearance. Whether all of its provisions will work and whether they will work in the way that its sponsors think, remains to be seen. Time alone will tell. The only way to find out is to try the measure and see how it works. So far as the subsidy proposed is concerned, while it seems fraught with many difficulties, it may prove successful. All that its sponsors expect from it is a reduction in rent of 2 shillings a week for each householder.

When it is realized that the scheme may involve in time an expenditure of £250,000,000 (\$1,250,000,000) out of the tax-payers' pockets it would seem as if the results accomplished might be disproportionate to the cost.

The Bill embodies many departures from existing practice. In the first place, the Bill sets up three methods of dealing with slums. It provides first for "Clearance Areas".

#### CLEARANCE AREAS

These are districts so bad that the only remedy is to clear the whole site and demolish the buildings upon it.

For the first time in the history of this movement in England, it is proposed that the local authorities may make a clearance order upon the owners, requiring each owner to demolish his property on the ground that it is no longer fit for human habitation and that the site must be cleared. This order of the local authorities must be approved by the Minister of Health after a public inquiry. If, after a reasonable time, the owners do not proceed to demolish the property, the local authorities may do so at the owners' expense, charging the cost up to them, and making it a lien upon the property and suing for its recovery.

After the site has been cleared, the ownership of the land remains with the existing owner and he can do as he likes with it—build new houses on it, or business buildings, or anything else in accordance with the local by-laws and with any town-planning scheme that may have been put forward.

This is certainly a departure from existing practice. We fear it may bring results not contemplated by its sponsors. Will not owners in many cases tear down their houses under this compulsion and leave the sites thus cleared desolate wastes of tumbled brickwork?

While this method will accomplish some of the purposes which the authorities have in mind and get rid of houses that are unfit for occupancy, it will not get very far forward with any intelligent treatment of the areas thus cleared, nor the improvement of districts of cities that cry aloud for improvement. The proposal seems to us a half-way one, and to fall short of accomplishing what is desired. We see little advantage in it over the existing method of having the local authorities clear the area and redevelop it.

#### NO COMPENSATION FOR THE BUILDINGS

Instead of making the owner clear the site, the local authorities may proceed as at present and purchase the site and buildings. If an agreement cannot be had as to the compensation to be paid as the purchase price, the local authorities may appeal to the Minister of Health to compel the taking of the property at the price desired. In such case a public inquiry has necessarily to be held. As at present, compensation is paid on the basis of site value only,—no compensation whatever being paid for the value of the building, no matter what its condition, only for the land.

As under the present law, where a site is to be used for rehousing or for open spaces, the amount of compensation paid is reduced to its value as a site for such purposes.

The advantages of the new procedure, as set forth by the Minister of Health are that these methods are simpler and more expeditious than under the present law, as they do away with the need for a formal "Scheme" and enable the local authorities to buy the area at private purchase, either by agreement or by compulsion.

When the local authorities have bought the land they must proceed to demolish the buildings and clear the site.



## THE CITY MAY SELL THE SITE IF IT WISHES

A radical departure from existing procedure is found in the grant of power to the local authorities to acquire a site for any purpose designated as a "clearance area". Under the new scheme the local authorities after clearing such an area may use it for any purpose they think appropriate. They may even sell it.

This new provision has been put into the law to meet the situation which developed a little over a year ago, in the famous "Derby Case"—a chief topic of discussion among housing reformers and local authorities ever since the decision of the High Court was first handed down. In that case, known as *Rex v. Minister of Health ex rel. parte Davis*, and a similar case known as *Rex v. Minister of Health ex rel. parte Yaffe*, the court of last resort held that the schemes were invalid because of the inclusion of a general power granted to the local authorities to sell or lease the land unconditionally after the site was cleared. In the Derby Case it had been the intention of the Corporation—as the land was quite unsuitable for working-class dwellings—to sell the site in the open market after it had been cleared and the insanitary houses on it demolished.

The courts held in so doing the local authorities went beyond the powers conferred upon them by the statute, and that there were no inherent powers vested in them to forcibly take other people's property from them, destroy it and then sell the land; and that the only condition under which the local authorities could clear a site, was where they desired to rebuild houses upon the same site, or to use it for a public open space.

This decision naturally created a great stir in England; for the practice which the court found unlawful and void had been followed by the Department of Health and its predecessors for more than half a century. According to the Minister of Health, the effect of this decision has been to hold up all further progress in Slum Clearance work throughout the country, as naturally the local authorities had hesitated to proceed with schemes where their right to do so was questioned.

One of the purposes of the new Housing Bill is to correct this defect in the statute. This has been done by providing that the local authorities may clear an area because it needs clearing, no matter what they are going to do with the site; and then may make whatever use of the site is appropriate—with power to sell it, if that seems the best thing to do.



## PAYING CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES

For the first time in England an attempt is to be made to remedy one of the unjust features of their Slum Clearance methods, which has given great concern to local authorities and public officials over there for a long time. That is the hardship entailed upon small shopkeepers who are compelled to move away and abandon the little businesses they have built up through long years of careful effort, having lost the good-will of their customers who are scattered to all quarters and find a new location elsewhere. It means practically starting their business life anew. This generally means a good deal of hardship; in extreme cases it means real suffering.

It is proposed in the new Bill to permit allowances to be made by the local authorities to cover the cost of such removals from a Clearance Area, and, to some degree, compensation for the loss of trade resulting thereby.

If this compensation is made on an equitable basis, the cost of Slum Clearance will, we fear, become prohibitive. We hope that this is more than a gesture.

## IMPROVEMENT AREAS

One of the distinctive features of the new measure, is the differentiation made between "Clearance Areas" and "Improvement Areas." An "Improvement Area" differs considerably from a "Clearance Area." As pointed out by the Minister of Health in the Parliamentary Debates

There are in all towns and in practically all villages aggregations of houses in varying degrees of bad condition. Large numbers of them are bad, some worse than others; generally badly arranged and generally over-crowded. Often these are areas of considerable size. The houses are not all so far gone that they need be destroyed; not so far gone as to justify a wholesale clearance of the area. It is an area, where if the worst are dealt with, if air and sunshine are let in and roads (streets) are made, it could be made reasonably healthy. It is such an area that the new measure treats as an improvement area.

The procedure of dealing with this situation may be summarized as follows:

Local authorities must define the improvement area on an official map and must pass a formal resolution to this effect, declaring the area in question to be an "Improvement Area" and must publicly advertise the fact. Before such a resolution can be passed, the local authorities must satisfy the Minister of Health that the work of im-



proving this area can be done in a reasonable time, and that arrangements will be made for rehousing the people who are to be displaced under proper conditions.

The local authorities must then deal with this area as follows:

(1) They may arrange for the demolition or repair of individual insanitary houses, under a further provision of the new law, which will be discussed later.

(2) They may purchase either by agreement or by condemnation the property required for opening out the area—making new streets or widening existing ones, or merely simply providing more open spaces—and for such purpose may demolish the buildings where necessary.

(3) Finally they may adopt and enforce by-laws that will prevent the houses from becoming over-crowded and once more reverting to slums.

This latter provision is considered of great importance by the present Labor Government. Speaking of this aspect of the Bill, the Minister of Health in the Parliamentary Debate said:

It is clear that if public money is to be devoted to tidying up and purifying an area of this kind, it must not be allowed to relapse again into its previous condition. Therefore, we propose, that where areas are dealt with in this way, local authorities shall have their by-laws to prevent any relapse into the old conditions which have been destroyed by the operation of the Slum Clearance scheme. The object of this, of course, is to get the local authority not to deal with this problem in a sporadic fashion, but to look at it broadly and ahead, and to take deteriorating areas, mark them off, deal with them in a proper order of priority, and tidy them up as and when they can, making it clear that once they are tidied up they are never going to become as bad as they were before.

The question of compensation for houses destroyed in "Improvement Areas" is on a somewhat different basis from the compensation paid in the case of "Clearance Areas". Houses purchased, to permit the opening out and replanning of the area, will be paid for on a quite different basis. Here the owner will receive not only compensation for the value of his land, but also compensation for his house at its market value—although in estimating the price to be paid, no compensation will be permitted for any additional rent that owners have been obtaining through over-crowding the building prior to the acquisition of the property. Where a house is defective or in an insanitary condition, the price paid for it will not be the value which the owner has been able to rent it for, but will be its estimated value on the basis of what it would have brought in if it had been put into good condition, subtracting the estimated cost of making such repairs.



What would seem to American minds a rather extraordinary arrangement, is the provision that if the owner of a particular house, taken under the improvement scheme, happens also to be the owner of another house that has been demolished under either a "clearance" or "improvement" scheme, and the demolition of that house has added to the value of other property possessed by the same owner, the amount of compensation to be paid him for the house in the "Improvement Area" may be reduced by that amount.

Where, under a "Clearance Scheme", it is necessary to include buildings and land that are not in the particular area as defined by the local authorities but are adjacent to it, or are surrounded by such an area though the buildings themselves are not insanitary, but it is necessary to include this property in order to make a comprehensive well-planned scheme for the redevelopment of the area—the local authorities may apply to the Minister of Health for power to condemn such adjacent property. Compensation for property of this kind is payable on the same basis as if it were in an "improvement area," that is, not only is the site paid for, but compensation is paid for the buildings as well.

#### DEALING WITH INDIVIDUAL HOUSES

A third principal method proposed by the new Housing Bill of dealing with slum conditions is the definite authority given to local officials to deal with individual dwelling houses that have become unfit for habitation and cannot be made fit at a reasonable cost. Such houses may be either inside or outside of an improvement area. Of course, the authorities in England have had such powers from time immemorial, almost back to the first beginnings of sanitation in Edwin Chadwick's time, in 1842, just as the authorities in New York City have had similar powers since the enactment of the first Housing Law back in 1867.

The advantages of the new proposals are chiefly in the shortening of the time necessary to deal with such property. According to the Minister of Health, at the present time when a local authority desires to deal with an individual insanitary house, the procedure is so long drawn out that, if the landlord chooses, it may take as much as 18 months before anything can actually be done.

The new measure contemplates that individual houses which are unfit for human habitation shall be divided into two groups, viz., those which can be made fit and those which cannot. With regard to the former, the local authorities are empowered to require the owner to



carry out the work necessary to make the houses fit for human occupancy. If the owner fails to do this in a reasonable time, then the local authorities are empowered to carry out the work themselves and recover the cost of such work from the owner, a power, which we may remark parenthetically, that has been enjoyed by the local authorities in New York City for the past 30 years.

A procedure, however, not known in New York or in England heretofore, is the proposal that in suitable cases the local authorities may advance to the owner the funds necessary to make such repairs, in case he is unable to meet the expense involved but can pay for them, if given a reasonable time. Instead of allowing the repairs that are so urgently needed to wait, and have the community and the occupants of the houses suffer, the measure contemplates a scheme by which the work will go forward and yet at the same time the community will not suffer financial loss.

With regard to individual houses that cannot be made fit for human habitation at reasonable expense, the local authorities are empowered to make an order for the demolition of the house and to see that such order is carried out. If the owner fails to demolish the building, the local authorities can proceed with the demolition. An appeal under this procedure, instead of being to the Minister of Health as at present, is to the County Court.

According to the Minister of Health, in all of these proceedings, dealing with "Clearance Areas", "Improvement Areas", and "Individual Insanitary Houses", it is not contemplated that the local authorities shall proceed with the demolition of unfit houses unless alternative accommodations are available.

### A HOUSING DOLE

What is the most unusual feature of the new measure is the method that is employed of granting a subsidy to encourage the more rapid clearance of slum areas and the demolition of insanitary houses. Under the 1923 Act the Central Government bore half of the estimated average annual loss that would be incurred by local authorities on a slum clearance scheme—that loss being the difference between the cost of clearing the area and the revenues obtained from it after new houses have been erected on the site and rented to the former occupants and others.

The Government finds that progress in Slum Clearance has been at much too slow a pace to satisfy the views, not merely of their con-



stituents, but of a large public throughout England, the Minister of Health pointing out that in the 30 years prior to 1919 but 75 slum clearance schemes had been confirmed, and in the 10 years since then, only 121, of which but 43 have been completed—the number of approved schemes involving but 15,000 buildings and the rehousing of but 74,000 people. They attribute this slowness in getting results to the fact that the cost of Slum Clearance imposes too heavy a burden on the local authorities—and hence upon the rate payers, or payer of local taxes.

Consequently, the Government has evolved a plan by which the cost of clearing slum areas and rehousing the occupants of these districts, will fall less heavily upon the local authorities, and decrease the burdens to be borne by local rate payers. A greater portion is to be borne by the tax payers throughout England. This easing of local burdens and putting them on the shoulders of the Central Government, at the expense of the taxpayers is a device England is adopting more and more. In the view of some observers it is largely responsible for England's present unfortunate industrial situation, whereby there are 1,750,000 unemployed more or less able-bodied workers on the "dole" carried on the backs of the taxpayers.

#### SUBSIDIZING RENTS

Irrespective of what view one may take as to the propriety of this method of meeting difficult social problems, the fact remains that the present Labor Government has chosen to deal with the housing problem and slum clearance by what may be termed a scheme for subsidizing rents.

Under the new Bill, in place of the Central Government's meeting half the loss that may be incurred by the local authorities on rehousing Slum dwellers, it is now proposed that the Central Government shall make a grant to the local authorities of 45 shillings every year for a period of 40 years for each person that may be rehoused under any one of the three plans laid down in the new Bill. This would mean in the case of a family of 5—father, mother and three children—an annual grant by the Central Government of £11, 5s (\$56.25), to the local authorities to meet the cost of rehousing this family—and this grant would run for the period of 40 years. This is the ordinary or usual subsidy that the Bill contemplates.

A greater subsidy is provided for in two specific instances. In the case of agricultural parishes the amount of subsidy is increased from 45s. annually per person to 50s. The other exception is intended to meet conditions such as prevail in great cities like London, Liverpool,

Manchester and other industrial centers, where because of high land values and the necessity of workers living near their work—it becomes necessary to rehouse a displaced population either on the same site or very near it; and, instead of small one-story cottages, large block dwellings or tenements have to be built. In these cases, it is proposed to increase the subsidy from 45s. per year per person to 70s. through the same period of 40 years. This larger subsidy will apply only where the local authorities find it necessary to build tenements of more than three stories, or where the land cleared costs more than £4,000 per acre.

Explaining in Parliament this aspect of the Government's plan, Mr. Greenwood, the Minister of Health, said:

All babies born in slums from now onwards will enjoy a dowry such as no State has ever conferred before. They will be able to make a contribution which will enable the local authority to remove them into the housing condition to which they are entitled.

The already over-burdened tax-payers of Great Britain when they come to get their tax bills may possibly differ with the Minister and think that it is *they*, the tax-payers, who are making this contribution—and not these new-born babes.

Naturally, the Government does not propose to grant this large subsidy without some degree of control of the rents to be charged—as well as of the types of houses that are to be built, and which will be eligible for this subsidy. The “Special Conditions” which apply to the houses built under the so-called Wheatley Act, or Act of 1924, are to apply to the houses that may be eligible to receive the subsidy now proposed.

As stated by the Minister of Health,

“The object of conditions as regards rent is to secure that the whole of the Exchequer (Treasury) subsidy, and the equivalent at least of £3 15s. per year from the local rates (taxes) should be applied in reduction of rent. That principle is being followed in this Bill, and the local authorities will make an estimate of annual expenses to be incurred under the Bill.”

The 60-year period is fixed for the contribution of the local authorities because of the fact that the life of a house is considered to be for that period.

### A SCHEME OF DIFFERENTIAL RENTS

Probably what is the greatest departure heretofore made in England in the treatment of any class in that country, is the proposal that different rents shall be charged to people situated under the same circumstances, and that those rents shall be adjusted to their “ability to pay”, rather than to what they get for them. .



Discussing this aspect of the question, the Minister of Health said in Parliament:

Within the limits of the aggregate rents to be obtained for all the houses under the Bill, the local authority will be given complete freedom. It must not draw in rents any more than the aggregate which I have described. Within these limits it may differentiate rents. A local authority will be able to charge such reasonable rents as it thinks fit, and to differentiate according to the ability of the tenants to pay. I have left the precise method by which they shall work to the local authorities themselves. They will, no doubt, do it in different ways. Some authorities, I imagine, will have one nominal standard of rent for all houses, and make abatements in special cases. Some authorities will make allowances, taking account of the number of children. Others will probably build rather different houses on different sites, but the local authority will be free to determine the way in which it shall make the rent burden rest more easily upon the occupants of the houses.

The results that the Government expects to obtain from these novel methods, insofar as the tenants are concerned, is—putting it in broad terms—a reduction of rents of at least 2 shillings per week from the rents that at present have to be charged for new houses under the existing scheme. Discussing this aspect of the question, the Minister of Health said:

It will make it possible to accommodate displaced persons as to one-half of them at any rate—in houses where the rent would be as low as 5s. a week plus rates (taxes); and as to the other half in houses at rents of 7s. per week plus rates. That, I think, will mean a substantial relief to the hard-pressed slum dweller.

He adds, however, it is clear that a grant of this kind cannot be made permanent, though the measure contemplates such a grant for 40 years—which to us would seem a very considerable measure of permanency. This large subsidy may be increased or decreased depending on what political Party may be in power; for, the bill provides for a review of the amount of the subsidy at three year periods. The first revision is to take place in October 1933, at the same time that the subsidy under the 1924 Act will be subject to reconsideration.

## RURAL HOUSING

An attempt is also made in the Bill to deal with the difficult subject of Rural Housing. This is more of a gesture than a comprehensive plan. Under the Bill a new duty is placed upon County Councils to keep their eye on the housing condition and needs of each rural district in their area and take steps to deal with bad housing conditions. Beginning this year, each Rural District Council is required to forward to the County Council information with regard to its housing condition and needs; and to do this at any time that the County Council may request it. It is expected that County Councils will thus have con-

stantly before them the needs and the measures proposed to meet these needs by the minor local authorities.

The Bill goes further than this, however, and provides that where a Rural District Council builds houses specifically for agricultural workers, the County Council will be required to make a contribution of £1 a year for a period of 40 years to help meet this expense, and keep rents down. This is not intended as a subsidy in relief of rent, but a subsidy to the Rural District Council in relief of rates, (taxes). According to the Minister of Health, this would mean that instead of a Rural District Council, with its depleted resources, having to meet a deficit in the rents of £3 15s. per house per year, in order to keep rents down within the means of the agricultural worker, it will only be required to meet a deficit of £2 15s. the remaining £1 of the deficit falling upon the County.

### THE HOUSING OF AGED COUPLES

For the first time in any housing law, recognition is given to the fact that all houses need not be alike and that all families are neither the same size nor similarly constituted; and that special provision should be made for two people living together, who have no need for the larger number of rooms requisite for a family with three or four growing children. There are numerous couples, people of advancing years if not of advanced years—whose housing needs are very simply met, who want a good sized bedroom, with a living room and scullery and bathroom. With this and an opportunity for a little garden their needs are entirely satisfied. Nor is this situation limited only to aged couples. There are many young couples without children, two sisters living together, or two brothers, whose needs would be completely satisfied with much smaller housing accommodations than are now permitted under any of the recent laws.

Speaking in Parliament, on this aspect of the Bill, the Minister of Health said:

I feel, myself, that this is an experiment well worth trying, for two reasons. In the first place it will be within the knowledge of many members of this House, that old-age pensioners are occupying houses that they have occupied for a quarter of a century, notwithstanding the fact that they are now grandparents and that their children have gone out to homes of their own; and anything which would take those aged people into other cottages would do something to relieve the congestion in the big towns. It would make available family houses for family need, and, not only so, but it is only justice to the aged people to provide them with houses which would be easier for the aged to live in comfortably than the houses which they at present occupy. We can here produce the minimum requirement with regard to size. \*\*\*\*\* A room in which to live and a room in which to sleep will be all that one requires. \*\*\*\* Of course, that will mean smaller costs.



## THE COST OF IT ALL

While the Bill is accompanied by a financial memorandum, setting for the items of contribution that would be expected to be made by the Central Government for the different kinds of effort to be undertaken, no attempt is made to give even an approximately accurate estimate of the cost of carrying out this ambitious scheme. How great that cost is, will be seen by the following statement made in the Financial Memorandum accompanying the Bill:

If 100,000 persons are displaced each year of whom 20,000 are rehoused in tenement buildings provided on the cleared sites, of unhealthy areas, the annual Exchequer (Treasury) grant proposed in the Bill would amount to about £250,000 a year for 40 years. If it be assumed that, under the existing law, 20,000 persons would be displaced and rehoused, it is estimated that the cost to the Exchequer on the basis of the present grant would be about £30,000 a year. On these assumptions, the additional Exchequer charge consequent on the Bill would amount to about £220,000 a year for 40 years, increasing by the same amount each year while the rate of displacement continued.

Looked at from another point of view, if 20,000 houses are built each year to rehouse the population displaced from the slums, assuming an average of 5 per family would mean the rehousing of 100,000 persons each year. On this basis the cost to the Central Government in the first year would be £2 5s. by 100,000 or £225,000; in the second year this would amount to £450,000, and by the end of the 10-year period it would be £2,250,000 (roughly \$11,250,000) per year for each year thereafter.

## A NOTABLE SPEECH ON HOUSING AND SLUMS

BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

In a long debate, which began in the House of Commons on April 7th and extended through three days, the Minister of Health, Arthur Greenwood, explained at length not only the provisions of the new Housing Bill, but the present Labor Government's attitude on both slums and housing. So much that was said on this occasion is so valuable and has application not merely to England but to all countries and to all communities that are grappling with these difficult problems, that we are quoting at considerable length from Mr. Greenwood's remarks on this occasion. Among other things, he said:

The Bill is a stage in the efforts of the nation to deal with a very vital problem which has been the subject in times past of many official inquiries, of much anxious thought and of a good deal

of legislation; but a problem which, nevertheless, has not yet satisfactorily been solved. Over 70 years ago John Bright said that "the nation in every country dwells in the cottage".

That is as true to-day as it was then. We have been accustomed to hear that the Englishman's home is his castle—I hope not literally, but at least metaphorically. It was the place where he had a secure refuge and where he was free from invasion. But the home is a good deal more than that. The Englishman's home is the nursery of personal and civic virtues; it is the institution of the whole of us, which in its intimate day by day life shapes the destinies of our people.

The housing problem, therefore, is not merely a problem of bricks and mortar; it is one of providing proper conditions of life for a community which deserves it. I am not against the pig sty for the pig. I am against the hovel and the pig sty for human beings, who, whether they like it or not, have cast upon them the responsibilities of citizenship. We are all familiar how in every town and indeed in every village there are decaying houses—dark and damp—houses with rotting floor boards and peeling walls, houses huddled together as though for very shame, houses teeming with people who are citizens, or potential citizens, of this country, living often hidden away from the gaze of the passerby by more respectable buildings. It is the fact that they have been hidden away so long that has kept the problem with us.

#### A FEW SAMPLES OF SLUM CONDITIONS

As illustrative of the slum conditions that are being met with all over the country, Mr. Greenwood cited an area in Exeter where there was a density of population of 388 persons per acre, where 78 houses per acre were packed together, and at the inquiry which was held, the town clerk said that the area was rat-infested, that the houses were mostly of lath and plaster, and many were without sanitary conveniences. The death rate for the area was nearly double that of the city as a whole, while the tuberculosis death rate was nearly 3 times that of the city as a whole.

In Stepney, a part of London, a similar area was presented where the infant death rate for 1924 was 161 per 1000, as compared with 74 for the whole borough. The number of deaths of children under five years of age was 55% of the total deaths in the area, as compared with 21% of the total deaths in the whole borough. The infectious disease rate for the area, excluding tuberculosis, was 19 per 1000, as compared with 4.6 for the whole borough; and the tuberculosis rate for the area was 2.87 per 1000, as compared with 1.06 for the entire district.



In the city of Nottingham an area less than half a mile from the center of the city described as a "notorious slum"—containing narrow alleys from 3 to 8 feet wide, with some streets only 12 feet wide in places—contained 131 "back-to-back" houses. In the main the buildings were from 100 to 200 years old and quite worn out. In this area the death rate was 49.5 per 1000 as against 12.5 per 1000 for the city as a whole; while the infantile death rate was more than double the infantile death rate throughout the city.

He continued:

The marvel is that so much good comes out of such unpromising surroundings. The people who inhabit the slums are much like the people who occupy the benches in this House. It is true that among the slum dwellers there are shiftless people. There are shiftless people in Mayfair whose shiftlessness never comes to the public eye because they are too well looked after by other people. There are people in the slums who ultimately are unable any longer to resist the influence of the slums and they merge into the depths of their environment; but there is a large proportion of slum dwellers who throughout the whole of their lives put up a very gallant fight to maintain as well as they can the decencies of family life.\*\*\*\*\*

#### MORE THAN ONE KIND OF HEROES

That I think is a true picture and proves that the majority of the people who are condemned—through no fault of their own—to unsatisfactory housing conditions, are, broadly speaking, a pretty fair sample of the nation, with the qualities of the nation and the defects of the nation. At the end of the War in a little country town I saw a miserable cottage that ought to have been destroyed. In the window of that cottage there was displayed proudly five cards, showing that some woman there had sent five men to the War. Across three of the cards was drawn a black mark, which showed that three of the men had lost their lives. I have wondered many times since what kind of houses the remaining two are occupying. They were the people to whom we offered homes at the end of the War.

By the common consent of all political parties we were to provide homes for heroes. But there are other classes of heroes besides war heroes, and my heart goes out particularly to those extraordinarily courageous women who are fighting year after year against the dirt and filth of slum environment—bringing up their families, looking after the breadwinner, often enough having to deal with sick children who ought never to have been sick had there been better housing. For them also something needs to be done and needs to be done urgently.

I am prepared to admit—as we all must admit—that very considerable progress has been made. For near 100 years, from the days of Chadwick, Shaftesbury and other pioneers down to to-day, an enormous

amount has been done and the foundations of a system of legislation dealing with houses has been on the statute books for a long time. In post-War years I think we can claim to have done as much as any other nation. Many of my predecessors, more distinguished than I, have helped to build up a housing code, and figures of housing achievement which no one would desire to belittle, but the truth is that to-day the people who need help most have received the least assistance. In spite of the enormous number of houses that have been built since the War the problem has in many respects become more complex and more serious.\*\*\*\*\*

### UGLIFICATION OF THE COUNTRY SIDE

There are two different aspects of the question which to-day cry aloud for more effective treatment; two diseases which are growing steadily worse. The first is the desecration of the countryside, the unorganised, sporadic development that is taking place, and the uglification of our towns and villages by purblind people. That is a problem which needs early treatment. It raises not merely the question of town planning or regional planning, but of national planning, in order to make the wisest use of our resources. That is a matter for separate legislation, which I hope it may be my privilege to introduce.

### THE PROBLEM OF THE SLUM

The second problem is the problem of bad and overcrowded houses and districts—what we call the slum problem. That is a problem which has never been effectively tackled. It is a problem which is becoming more difficult of solution year by year, partly because of the progressive decay of old slums and partly because of the deterioration in recent years of more and more property to the slum level; in other words, the creation of new slums.

Our progress in the matter of slum clearance has been deplorably slow. In the 30 years before 1919, 75 schemes were confirmed. In the 10 years since then, 121 schemes have been confirmed, of which 43 have been completed. The number of houses and other buildings in confirmed schemes is approximately 15,000. The number of persons whom it is desired to re-house is about 74,000. The number of houses that are to be built is 12,000. The number of houses that have already been demolished is between 8,000 and 9,000, and the number that have been actually completed during the 10 years just closed is only 9,743—a tragically



small contribution to the solution of a problem which has become more serious within the last 10 years. It is, obviously, shortsighted of the nation to spend money on health services, and to condemn people to live under conditions which create disease with which the health services are brought into existence to deal.

After citing a number of striking instances of slum conditions disclosed by official reports, Mr. Greenwood finds the reason for these conditions and the slowness of the country in dealing with its slum problem in the difficulties inherent in the procedure laid down by law, which he proceeds to describe as follows:

#### TIED UP IN RED TAPE

For, consider what has to be done to get a slum clearance scheme through and completed. The first step is taken by the medical officer of health, who makes a representation. Following upon that, the local authority may make a declaration that the area is an unhealthy area. In some cases it has taken the local authority 30 years to make up its mind. The local authority then—with magnificent dignity and in a leisurely manner—prepares a scheme for the improvement of the area, the scheme is advertised; notices of it are served on the owner, the lessees and the tenants. Then the local authority presents a petition to the Minister praying that an order may be made confirming the scheme. The Minister then holds an inquiry—not always a very speedy process—and after that he may confirm the scheme either as it stands or with modifications. After all this time has elapsed, and this complicated procedure has come to an end, the local authority is then at the very beginning of a slum clearance scheme—and not at the end. It will then proceed to purchase the property, either voluntarily or by compulsion, and proceed with the work of actual slum clearance.\*\*\*\*\*

#### THE COST TOO HEAVY FOR THE RATE PAYERS

That is the first obstacle to any successful attack on the problem of the slum—the problem of the existing law and procedure under it. The second is the existing grant and all that it involves. It is quite clear, I think, that a grant of 50% of the estimated net annual loss is inadequate, because it places too heavy a burden upon our local authorities. In the first place, because the net estimated annual loss is, as to half, borne by the Treasury, there is followed inevitably a system of excessive control at every stage in the procedure of a local authority to clear a slum and maintain new houses subsequently. Every purchase of land, or proposal to build, every contract for sale and disposal of land subsequently, all

arrangements as to rent, have been subject hitherto to the approval of the Minister of Health. This meticulous and detailed supervision is both a discouragement to local authorities and an inevitable source of delay.

The third reason why—particularly in recent years—we have not made very rapid progress is, that local authorities have had in the forefront of their minds what I may call normal housing requirements, and their energies have gone in that direction. But the time has now arrived when in building under the Act of 1924 they should deal in a generous way with the problem of the slum, and to deal with this problem it is clear that we must eliminate unnecessary procedure, that we must secure more direct and less cumbrous arrangements, that we must give the local authorities greater freedom, and that we must give them also greater financial assistance. It is important, in addition, to tighten up in some respects the existing law in order to make it more effective, and it is equally important to enable local authorities to stop the degradation of new districts towards the slum level. That is, broadly, what is proposed in the Bill.\*\*\*\*\*

### THREE AVENUES OF ATTACK ON THE SLUM

In making an attack, and an ordered attack, upon slum conditions in our towns and villages, it is clear that the local authority must have in mind three broad classes of cases. There is first, the area which we call in the Bill the “Clearance Area”—an area which is so bad that complete clearance is the only satisfactory remedy.

There is, secondly, the area which, though it may be pretty bad, is still worth saving; and, if you do not save it, it will get worse—an area which can be opened up and made decently habitable. That is an area which in the Bill we call an “Improvement Area”. Thirdly, there is the problem of the individual bad house which happens to fall outside either the clearance area or the improvement area but which ought to be repaired or demolished. Part I of the Bill deals with clearance areas and improvement areas. Part 2 deals with the problem of the individual house. Part I replaces and extends a number of provisions in the Consolidated Act of 1929, and deals with measures to be taken for the clearance and improvement of unhealthy areas. I have already explained the difficult and complex procedure which at present obtains in regard to slums, and the difficulty created by the Derby case. The first part of the Bill deals with those two questions. It does away with what is called a “scheme,” and it separates the procedure for the dec-



laration and clearance of an area from the procedure for dealing with an area when it has been cleared.

That is one of the difficulties in the Derby case. My submission is that while the landlord is perfectly entitled to know the procedure by which he is to be dispossessed, while he is entitled to know what is being done with the area—if it is to be used for rehousing or as an open space—because that affects his compensation, it is no business of his what the local authority does with the property after it has been obtained. And, therefore, I think a distinction must be drawn between the acquisition of an area and the subsequent use to which it is put. In order to get over the difficulty created by the Derby decision local authorities are in this part of the Bill given a general power of disposing of the land on a cleared area. \*\*\*\*\*

### CLEARANCE AREAS

Now as to clearance areas. Clause I defines it and prescribes the procedure of a local authority in declaring an area to be a clearance area. An area may be cleared in one of two ways under the Bill. It may be cleared, first, by requiring the owners to demolish the buildings themselves; or, secondly, by the local authority purchasing the area and then arranging for demolition. The method of requiring the owners to demolish is a new one and is frankly designed to enable local authorities—where they wish to do so—to secure the removal of a bad slum without being obliged to incur enormous capital expenditure on purchase and clearance.

If it is right to require an owner—as we shall under the Bill—to demolish a single house there is no reason why all the owners in an area should not be called upon to demolish all the houses in a clearance area. This is a method which meets with the approval of local authorities. If a local authority wishes to proceed by this method it will make a clearance order which must be confirmed by the Minister of Health. If objections are taken—as they may be in certain cases—then, of course, there must be a public inquiry. But after an order has become operative it will then be the duty of the owners to demolish the buildings; and, if they fail to do so, the local authority is empowered to enter and demolish and recover the cost. The cleared site will then remain with the owners and they can do what they like with it—subject of course to the local by-laws and to any town planning scheme which may be put forward. They have been robbed of nothing which was worth anything and they still have their land. What could be fairer?

The other method is one whereby local authorities will purchase the site and buildings—although the buildings in a clearance area will have no great value—and themselves undertake the removal of the buildings on the site. The procedure proposed now is somewhat more expeditious and simpler than under the present law, because it does away with the need for a formal scheme and entitles a local authority to buy the area by agreement or by compulsion. Where they are unable to buy by agreement they may make a compulsory purchase order of which due notice of course must be given to all owners and the order must be confirmed by the Minister, who must hold an inquiry if there are objections. When the local authorities have bought the land they must proceed to demolish the buildings on the site and appropriate the land for some purpose for which they have statutory powers—or dispose of it in some other way. In some cases, of course, they may wish to rehouse on the site or to retain it as an open space.\*\*\*\*\*

#### IMPROVEMENT AREAS

With regard to the improvement area, the Bill contains a new development of the methods available to local authorities for dealing with unsatisfactory housing conditions. There are in all towns—and in practically all villages—aggregations of houses in varying degrees of bad condition. Large numbers of them are bad—some worse than others—generally badly arranged and generally overcrowded. Often these are areas of considerable size. The houses are not all so far gone that they need be destroyed; not so far gone as to justify a wholesale clearance of the area. It is an area where, if the worst are dealt with, if air and sunshine are let in and roads are made, it could be made reasonably healthy. That is what is proposed in these two Clauses; only, of course, it is essential that if you cream off, either from houses that have been destroyed to make more open spaces for roads, or from the overcrowded houses into new houses, that surplus population, you cannot be sure that that area will not become a semi-slum very shortly.

It is clear that if public money is to be devoted to tidying up and purifying an area of this kind, it must not be allowed to relapse again into its previous condition. Therefore, we propose that where areas are dealt with in this way, local authorities shall have their bylaws to prevent any relapse into the old conditions which have been destroyed by the operation of the slum clearance scheme. The object of this, of course, is to get the local authority not to deal with this problem in a sporadic fashion, but to look at it broadly and ahead, and to take de-



teriorating areas, mark them off, deal with them in a proper order of priority, and tidy them up as and when they can, making it clear that once they are tidied up they are never going to become as bad as they were before.

It is clear that in the case of both clearance areas and improvement areas it is essential to the scheme that there should be the provision of houses, that indeed the provision of houses should go on whilst the other process is taking place. In the case of the improvement area, which I regard as being the only scientific form of reconditioning, there is a dual responsibility. The useless houses, the condemned houses go; the local authority drives its streets through where it thinks it needs them and opens out areas which it thinks need more air than they at present have. Then it says to the landlord—to whom better could it say it?—"You must put this house into repair, and you must keep it in repair, and you must not overcrowd it any more." That is real reconditioning, because the responsibility for reconditioning of the individual cottage falls where it ought to fall—on the landlord—and the general responsibility for furbishing up the area as a whole falls on the local authorities.\*\*\*\*\*

#### THE VEXED QUESTION OF COMPENSATION

It is necessary at this point that I should say something about the vexed question of compensation, which is dealt with in Clause 9. I would remind the House that in 1919 by general acclamation the present basis of compensation was settled. It has operated for nearly 11 years. Local authorities and property owners have become accustomed to it. Indeed prices have become adjusted to it. It would need overpowering arguments for me, of all Ministers of Health, to go back on the settlement of 1919. I do not believe that there is a great case for it. I would not willingly take any step which would add substantially to the cost of slum clearance. If we were to make a substantial alteration in the law with regard to compensation we would add substantially to the cost of slum clearance.

As the law stands, when a house is condemned it is worth nothing. That is right. When meat is condemned it is worth nothing—either. I have never heard of any powerful agitation for the compensation of butchers who expose rotten meat for sale to the public. A condemned house, condemned by responsible people, as unfit for human habitation is a house which obviously is worth nothing. The site is worth something in almost all cases and the landlord is entitled to that.

But the law, as laid down by other Members of this House than myself 11 years ago, made a reduction in the compensation in cases where an area was to be used for working class houses or open spaces, and ever since that time compensation has been dealt with on that basis, and the sales of property that have taken place have presumably been carried out with that knowledge. It seems right, therefore, that we should keep this broad principle of site value. I saw this morning for the first time a letter in one of the newspapers from the Secretary of the Property Owners' Protection Association:

The Bill re-enacts Section 46 of the existing Housing Act, which has been condemned in no uncertain terms by the late Minister of Health. A consequence of this is that the provisions for compensation of owners of sound property within unhealthy areas are deliberately unjust. I say deliberately, because ample evidence has been placed before successive Ministers of Health that Section 46 of the Housing Act of 1925 has occasioned grievous hardship and injustice to thousands of comparative poor people.

My reply to that would be that if the proof is so ample why did not my predecessors act upon it? It is very reasonable to suggest that the late Government, whose supporters to-day are showing a great deal of interest in the problem, had four and a-half years—a good deal of which time was wasted—during which, if this was a burning injustice, they might have removed it.\*\*\*\*\*

As regards compensation, I believe that the House, on reflection, will agree that it would be a mistake to depart from the present basis. There are cases which ought to be helped, and a local authority will be enabled to make reasonable allowances to displaced persons in aid of removal expenses; and to make grants, if they so desire, towards any loss which in their opinion has been sustained by any person by reason of the disturbance of his trade or business consequent upon his having to leave his premises. That provision, I think it will be admitted, is reasonable.

#### DEALING WITH INDIVIDUAL HOUSES

Then, with regard to the individual house, there will be cases in many towns—indeed, I imagine, in all towns—of individual houses or very small groups of houses, which will be outside a clearance scheme and outside an improvement scheme. These are dealt with in Clauses 16 and 17, and the general idea of the alterations which are being made is to simplify and shorten the procedure for dealing with such houses. Unfortunately, nowadays, when a local authority desires to deal with an individual house the procedure is such that, if the landlord chooses, it may be 18 months before anything can be done. That procedure, as



I say, will be shortened; and, in this case, it is provided that the tribunal of appeal shall be the County Court instead of the Minister.

The Bill contemplates that individual houses which are unfit for human habitation should be divided into their two proper categories—namely, those which can be made fit and those which cannot be made fit. In regard to houses which fall into the first class—those which can be made fit—local authorities have the duty imposed upon them of requiring the owner to carry out the work necessary to make the house fit. If the owner defaults, then the local authority itself may do the work and recover the cost. In Clause 40 of the Bill local authorities are given power in suitable cases to advance money to owners undertaking repairs; because there may be cases where repairs are urgently needed, and in which the owner is, at the time, unable to meet the charge. An advance of that kind would, of course, be a help. If, however, the house is unfit and cannot at a reasonable expense be made fit, then the local authority may make an order and enforce the demolition of the house. Here, again, as in the case of the clearance and improvement areas, it is not contemplated that local authorities should proceed with the demolition of unfit houses, unless new houses or alternative accommodation of some other kind is made available.

#### LOCAL AUTHORITIES MUST PREPARE A HOUSING PROGRAMME

The third part of the Bill deals with a more general question, namely, that of housing programmes. I have felt for some time that one of the weaknesses of our housing administration has been the fact that the local authorities have, as it were, just lived from year to year. They have never really visualised their problems, and have never developed a coherent policy for carrying out the work which lies before them. Part III of the Bill provides that in the case of every Borough and Urban District with over 20,000 population the authority shall this year, and in every fifth year, submit a programme of the housing work which they propose to undertake during that quinquennial period. That will include all their housing work—not merely under this measure, but under the other Acts of Parliament as well. I believe that the effect of that provision will be to give us a continuity of effort and a definite scientific programme such as we have not enjoyed before.

#### SUBSIDIZING THE SLUM DWELLER

I now come to the financial aspect of the Bill. In Clause 23, we propose to make a very substantial change in the basis of Exchequer

assistance for rehousing purposes. At present the local authority, as I have explained, receives its one-half of the estimated net annual loss—and this, as I have pointed out, means an enormous amount of supervision; and in itself is not adequate. Therefore, we propose a new grant on a unit basis. The grant will be in aid of the activities of the local authorities—the expenses of the local authorities—in dealing with clearance areas, in dealing with improvement areas, and in dealing with the demolition of individual houses.

The persons rehoused in any of these three ways, under any of these three schemes, will be eligible in respect of the grant which is a grant per person—per man, woman, and child. All babies born in slums from now onwards will enjoy a dowry such as no State has ever conferred before. They will be able to make a contribution which will enable the local authority to remove them into the housing condition to which they are entitled. The grant will be an annual grant payable for 40 years. The association of local authorities with whom this matter has been discussed agreed to that basis and it has been fixed so that the proportion of the cost of the scheme borne by the local authorities shall be diminished and the rates charged, therefore, proportionately reduced.

After consultation with the local authorities we have arrived at the figure of 45 shillings per year for 40 years per person rehoused under this Bill as the amount of the grant. In the case of a family of 5 that would mean a grant of £11 5s. per year for 40 years. In two cases the amount of the grant is increased. In the case of persons displaced from houses and rehoused in agricultural parishes the amount of the grant will be increased to 50s. per person for 40 years.

#### MORE SUBSIDY FOR TALL TENEMENTS

There is another exception which we have had to take into account. There are one or two places—they are not numerous, and London is the outstanding case—where the conditions are such that a considerable amount of rehousing must take place on the site where the people have lived before. Much as I would prefer to see our population spreading out rather than rising heavenward in their dwellings, one has to face the fact that for a limited number of our people who must live—or who passionately desire to live—in the centres of very large cities, tenement provision must be made.

It happens that tenement provision is expensive and that almost invariably—indeed I may say invariably—when a local authority has



to rehouse people on the site in tenements—by which I mean something more than three stories—they have to do so on land which is tremendously expensive. It was felt therefore that we should provide for the limited number of cases in which the local authorities can prove to the Minister that they must rehouse on the site, that it must be done in tenements, and that the land is expensive. In these cases, we propose to give an additional 25s. per person for 40 years—or in all an amount of £3 10s.

The number of houses required to be built for the accommodation of the persons to be displaced and on which the grant will be paid will, of course, depend on their size and type. They cannot all be alike; some will have to be much larger than others. They will be fixed beforehand on the submission of proposals, and must be approved by the Minister. That, I think, will enable us to avoid some of the dangers to which reference has been made in the Press.

#### RENTS AND CHARACTER OF HOUSES CONTROLLED

As to the rents, the special conditions are similar to those applicable to houses built under the Act of 1924. The object of conditions as regards rent is to secure that the whole of the Exchequer subsidy—and the equivalent at least of £3 15 s. per year from the local rates—should be applied in reduction of rent. That principle is being followed in this Bill; and the local authorities will make an estimate of annual expenses to be incurred under the Bill. It will calculate the annual equivalent of those expenses over 60 years; it will calculate the annual equivalent for 60 years of the Exchequer grant and the local authority's contributions; and it will subtract these grants from its own expenditure; and that will give the local authority the aggregate rent which it can charge for the year.\*\*\*

#### DIFFERENTIAL RENTS

The life of a house is at least 60 years and we are bound to make the calculation of the expenses and the grants on the same basis. Clearly one ought in estimating rents to be charged, to have regard to the minimum life of the house. Within the limits of the aggregate rents to be obtained for all the houses under the Bill the local authority will be given complete freedom. It must not draw in rents any more than the aggregate which I have described. Within these limits it may differentiate rents. A local authority will be able to charge such reason-

able rents as it thinks fit, and to differentiate according to the ability of the tenants to pay. I have left the precise method by which they shall work to the local authorities themselves. They will no doubt do it in different ways. Some authorities, I imagine, will have one nominal standard of rent for all houses, and make abatements in special cases. Some authorities will make allowances, taking account of the number of children. Others will probably build rather different houses on different sites—but the local authority will be free to determine the way in which it shall make the rent burden rest more easily upon the occupants of the houses.\*\*\*\*

I estimate that it would be possible in the normal case—I do not say in every case—to let half of the houses built under this Bill, on a broad average, at least 2s. per week less than the rents at present charged for houses under the existing scheme. That will make it possible to accommodate displaced persons—as to one half of them, at any rate—in houses where the rent would be as low as 5s a week plus rates, and as to the other half in houses at rent of 7s per week plus rates. That, I think, will mean a substantial relief to the hard-pressed slum dweller. It is clear, of course, that a grant of this kind cannot be made permanent.

#### THE HOUSING OF AGED COUPLES

After pointing out the new provisions with reference to Rural Housing with its increased subsidy, the Minister of Health goes on to call attention to a novel feature of the Bill—in which an attempt is made for the first time—to deal with the needs of old people and persons without children, who require much smaller housing accommodations, than do the average family.

On this point he says:

I need not refer in detail to the Clauses in Part V of the Bill, because I have touched upon most of them already. One or two I must refer to. Clause 39 deals with the provision for aged persons of houses of a smaller size than those for which special assistance can be given to-day. I feel myself that this is an experiment well worth trying, for two reasons. In the first place, it will be within the knowledge of many members of this House that old age pensioners are occupying houses which they have occupied for a quarter of a century—notwithstanding the fact that they are now grandparents and that their children have gone out to homes of their own; and anything which would take those aged people into other cottages would do something to relieve the congestion in the big towns. It would make available family houses



for family needs; and, not only so, but it is only justice to the aged people to provide them with houses which will be easier for the aged to live in comfortably than the houses which they at present occupy.

We can here produce the minimum requirement with regard to size. If so be that I receive an old age pension myself, and live to that age, my requirements will be modest. A room in which to live and a room in which to sleep will be all that one requires; and so long as these cottages—these aged workers' homes—are owned by the local authorities and the grant is payable on condition that only aged people live in them, we can dispense with the present minimum conditions and build smaller dwellings for them. Of course, that will mean smaller costs; in fact, what we are doing is to pay here two-thirds of the contribution paid under the 1924 Act—and the subsidy in this case, therefore, will be £5 per year for 40 years.\*\*\*\*\*

I will not explain any more of the details of the Bill, and I now come to an end. I hope the Bill will commend itself to the House, and I hope that it will be speedily—I emphasize the word—passed into law. I hope that the local authorities—with whom I have endeavoured to work during recent months in the closest harmony and co-operation—will receive this Bill when it is on the statute books with both hands and extract from it 100% of what value it contains.

### THE FINAL CONQUEST OF THE SLUMS

I hope they will now with a new measure in their hands pursue to the very end with real vigor, with zeal, and with determination, the final conquest of the slums. I believe they will—and I believe they will have behind them the active support of a large body of public opinion. Now that by common consent of all sections of opinion in this country a definite, concerted attack is being made on the slum problem, I think we should agree that there must be no truce until the very end and until the slums have been completely destroyed. It is a struggle which from now onwards will, I hope, be waged ceaselessly and relentlessly until the last hovel sinks into the earth and the last over-crowded family has a decent home. When that day comes—whatever it may have cost in treasure—the nation will have rid itself of a gigantic burden of disease, of misery, of degradation, and will have done what it ought to have done before, and laid truly one of the essential foundations of a civilised society—the homes of the people.

# SLUMS, OVER-CROWDING AND POVERTY

## CHILDREN'S "RENT ALLOWANCES"

While the causes that create slums are varied, there can be no question that poverty is a vital factor. As has been pointed out by many observers, few people who are able to afford better living accommodations continue to live in slums from choice.

A very interesting discussion of these aspects of the question with particular emphasis laid upon the importance of over-crowding in creating slum evils—was had at one of the periodic meetings called frequently in England by the National Housing and Town Planning Council.

On that occasion Dr. C. Killick Millard, Medical Officer of Health of Leicester, read a paper in which, after stressing these factors in the slum problem, he advanced as a remedy for the situation a scheme of "differential renting" or the adjustment of the rents paid by the people to be re-housed in accordance with their ability to pay. This, by the way, has become one of the principal features of the new Government Housing Bill introduced by the present Labor Government.

Dr. Millard said:

Overcrowding is, in my opinion, the most serious factor in the slum problem, and I think that most medical officers of health will agree with me in this\*\*\*\* Overcrowding in the slums is not the result of the post-war housing shortage, though doubtless aggravated by it. Overcrowding in the slums existed long before the war; indeed, it has always existed; and it will continue to exist wherever poverty and large families coexist—in spite of all our new houses, until some new method of utilising them is adopted.

My next point—and I particularly wish to stress this—is that by far the worst aspect of the overcrowding in the slums is its physical and moral effect upon children—the rising generation. Children usually abound in the slums, and it is the existence of large families in tiny houses which is the principal cause of overcrowding.\*\*\*\*\*

If there were no children in the slums the slum problem would be of only minor importance.

We are all agreed that the Registrar-General's standard for overcrowding of more than 2 persons per room is altogether inadequate, although even on that basis it has been estimated that one-tenth of the population of the country are living under conditions of overcrowding. Nor is a standard based merely on cubic space per person adequate. The most important factor in overcrowding is the improper mixing of the sexes. We must hold out at all costs for separate sleeping rooms for all persons of opposite sex above a given age, unless they are couples living as man and wife.\*\*\*\*\*



## POVERTY A VITAL FACTOR

The great difficulty which hitherto has defeated all efforts to solve this problem of overcrowding is not merely the shortage of houses, but the inability of poor people with large dependent families to pay anything like an economic rent. Overcrowding and poverty too often go together. It is a well-established fact that as we go down in the social scale the birth-rate tends to go up, with the unfortunate result that—speaking generally—low wages and large families go together. As a further result, we find that within certain limits the smaller the house the larger the average size of the family occupying it. This is not the place to enter upon a well-worn controversial question, but the phenomenon I am referring to is not disputed and has got to be reckoned with by all housing reformers.

## LARGE FAMILIES NOT DESIRED

But it is by no means entirely an economic question, for even where a large family are prepared to pay the rent of a larger house they usually experience great difficulty in obtaining one. They find that they are not at all welcomed as tenants—certainly not by private landlords—and sometimes not, I fear, by municipal housing committees in spite of the express provision in the Wheatley Act, 1924, that preference should be given in the allocation of municipal houses to large families. The fact is, of course, that large families do not always make the best tenants. In bad times the purchase of food and clothing for the children naturally has to take precedence over the regular payment of rent. Property depreciates more rapidly and sooner gets into disrepair, and crowds of poor children do not enhance the respectability of a neighbourhood. Moreover, people with large families are sometimes suspected of being more or less feckless and lacking in prudence, and in some cases no doubt there is justification for this attitude.

## “DIFFERENTIAL RENTING” URGED AS A REMEDY

Dr. Millard's remedy for the situation is the adoption of a scheme of differential renting in the new houses in which the former slum dwellers are to be re-housed. He points out that Welwyn Garden City has already made a beginning in this principle, where it has been in successful operation for 4 years. The method adopted at Welwyn is to add to the normal rent of the municipal houses an initial increase of 9d. per week, and then to grant a rebate of 6d. per week for every child who had not yet left school. As each child in succession leaves school or if a child dies the rebate is withdrawn. On the other hand, where lodgers are taken and this is only when permitted by the Council a tax of 1s. on each lodger is imposed. This plan successfully carried out at Welwyn Garden City, is carried out without regard to the income of the families occupying the houses in question. It is reported that it adds nothing or practically nothing to the local taxes or rates.

Dr. Millard's criticism of this is that the rebate of 6d. per child is too small to adequately meet the case of the large family in the slums.

### THIS METHOD A SUCCESS AT WELWYN

According to Sir Theodore Chambers, the head of Welwyn Garden City, this scheme, put into practice at Welwyn 4 years ago, has been maintained in connection with 300 houses owned by the Urban District Council and 223 houses owned by Public Utility Societies. Six pence a week rebate on the rent is allowed for each child under 14 years of age—extended to 16 years of age if the child remains at school—and a shilling a week extra is charged for each authorized lodger. In the aggregate of 523 houses on a weekly rent roll of £368 11s. 8d. the rebates for children amount to £20 17s. a week, and the extra payment for lodgers amount to £3 11s. a week. The largest rebate in any one family has been £10 8s. a year in respect of 8 children—a material help during the period of maximum financial stringency in the life of the family. The system is not a difficult one to work in practice.

Commenting on this, Sir Theodore Chambers says that the arrangement offers a sound method of differential subsidization. He adds:

Nothing is more absurd than to reduce the rents of all the houses in a scheme, because a proportion of the tenants are without the necessary ability to pay, when with a little trouble a given amount of subsidy can be made to go much farther and made to meet definite cases of need.

He adds further:

In my opinion a large percentage of the state and municipal subsidization to housing has passed quite unnecessarily into the pockets of people who could have done without it, and this has had the effect that less has been done than could otherwise have been done to solve the problem of the housing of the working classes. Large families have also been forced to live under overcrowded conditions.

### THE DETAILS OF THE SCHEME

Urged strongly by E. D. Simon, the Liberal housing reformer, the National Housing and Town Planning Council have adopted the principle of differential renting under the title of "Children's Rent Allowances" a policy which in general has been embodied in the new Government Housing Bill. This scheme was worked out by a special committee appointed by that organization, which formulated a so-called "Policy for the Slums".



Under this scheme it was proposed that where the total family income does not exceed 55 shillings a week, a rebate from the rent shall be allowed of 3s. for the first 3 children and 6d. per child for any after the first 3, with a maximum allowance of 4s. Where the total family income is below 45s. the rebate is to be 4s. for the first 3 children with a maximum rebate of 5s.

For the purpose of the rent allowance, a child is deemed one under 14 years of age, or an older child who is still at school. With the approval of the local authorities other dependents can be classed as children for purposes of the rebate. The Committee further recommended that two-thirds of the cost of such children's rent allowances, should be borne by the Central Government and one-third by the local authorities.

Discussing this scheme, Dr. Millard says:

In the first place the rent allowance must be adequate or it will fail in its purpose. And in considering this point we must remember that it is not only the higher rent that makes it so difficult for poor large families to move out of the slums, but the increased cost of transport in getting to and from their work. This may easily amount to an extra 2 shillings a week.

The next consideration is this. Children so long as they are not earning anything are a very serious liability, but when once they begin to earn—or very soon after, and for so long as they remain at home—they are a very valuable economic asset. As one child after another leaves school and goes to work, the economic position of the large family progressively improves, until, at length, when most of the children are at work, the position of the family—instead of being one of poverty—becomes one of comparative affluence.

#### THE EARNINGS OF YOUNG PEOPLE A BIG FACTOR

I have been making inquiries as to the earnings of young people in Leicester in 6 of our principal industries. Boys or girls on leaving school at the age of 14 begin at once to earn from 10s. to 12s. per week. At the end of a year they will be earning about 13s. or 14s. a week. At the age of 16 years they will be earning 17s. to 18s. 6d. As soon as they get put on to piecework their earning power usually quickly increases and at the age of 17 years they would be earning—if on full time—21s. to 25s. By the time a girl is 18 she will be earning from 30s. to £2 or more—often, indeed, as much or more than her father! Boys in Leicester do not reach their maximum earning power quite as soon as girls, but a lad of 18 is probably bringing home 25s. to 28s.

These figures may be taken as an average. They make no allowance for short time; but it is quite certain that young people—in Leicester at any rate—could quite well afford to pay something back through their parents towards the rebate allowed when they were children and earning nothing.

My suggestion, therefore, is this. Whenever a children's rent allowance is given it should be made a condition that when the time

comes for the children to go to work they will be regarded as lodgers, and an increment, or "child lodger tax", will then be added to the rent—of, say, 1s. per week per child—so long as the child continues to reside at home.

In other words, the rebate allowed for children during the early years in the life history of an individual family when children are a liability, would be regarded somewhat in the nature of a loan to be repaid in the later years of the family history when the children become an asset.\*\*\*\*\*

I would much prefer, as at Welwyn, to have no income limit. An income limit is going to cause much trouble and no little discontent and heart burning—especially as a man's income is not a fixed quantity. Let the scheme be open to all; though, of course, in selecting tenants the Allocation Committee can, if they wish, take a man's income into consideration and so prevent abuse by persons well able to afford an economic rent. But the fact that the rebate is in the nature of money advanced, to be repaid later, greatly weakens any argument in favor of an income limit.

### A METHOD PROPOSED

Summarizing this scheme of rent allowances for children, Dr. Millard puts it as follows:

The exact details of any scheme of differential renting will need to be carefully worked out for each locality. I would suggest something like the following scheme as one which—whilst affording a very substantial measure of relief to the large family—would ultimately entail very little additional burden on the rates.

1. Begin by adding an initial increment of 1s. 6d. per week to the normal rent.
2. Allow an abatement of 1s. 6d. per child for the first 3 children, and of 1s. for the next 3. In the case of an A3 house I would allow nothing further for children after 6, so that the maximum gross abatement would be 7s. 6d. Allowing for 1s. 6d. initial increment, this would be equal to a maximum net abatement of 6s.
- Where the number of children exceeds 6 they ought to have a B3 house, and for such a house I would allow 1s. per child for 5, instead of 3 children, after the first 3, thus making the maximum gross rebate 9s. 6d. or 8s. net.
3. This abatement to cease progressively and automatically as each child leaves school.
4. As each child goes to work a "child lodger tax" of 1s. to be imposed—the maximum for any family after deducting any abatement for young children to be 3s. It might be desirable to postpone the "child lodger tax" until one year after each child leaves school, when his or her earnings would be higher.
5. Whenever children cease to live at home, as when they get married, the "child lodger tax" to cease automatically.
6. In any case where the taking of ordinary lodgers is permitted a lodger tax of 1s. 6d. per lodger to be imposed.

### HOW IT WOULD WORK OUT

Dr. Millard not only outlines this scheme in general but submits a table showing in detail examples of differential renting in different kinds of houses—that is, the non-parlor and the parlor type—in the



case of a family with 2 children, where the normal rent is 11s., and a family with 4 children and 6 children at the same rental; and a non-parlor house where there is a family with 8 children at a normal rental of 13s. per week, showing the situation that would exist in each year of the marriage of the parents, beginning at the first year and extending on to 36 years of married life. For each of these years he shows the number of children, if any, the number at home, the number not at work, the number at work, the rental, the amount of rebate, the amount of tax and the net rent.

The scheme is an interesting one and its application in the different communities of England under the new Government Housing Bill will be watched with keen interest. While the idea of rent allowances for children is novel and places the housing problem in England largely on the basis of a charity or social work problem, rather than a building problem, it is not without interest to note that a scheme of "differential rental" for the Government houses on the basis of "ability to pay" was first suggested in England and urged in these columns about 10 years ago by Lawrence Veiller in his comprehensive Report on "England's Efforts To Meet the Housing Shortage", in 1920.\*

## THE SLUM DWELLER A FACTOR IN THE SLUM PROBLEM

Words of wisdom—evidently the result of long and intensive experience in the effort to clear Scottish Slums—were given to an assemblage of housing reformers in England some months ago by Councillor Fergus Harris, of the Housing and Town Planning Committee of the Corporation of Edinburgh. Discussing the work done in that Scotch city, he pointed out that the slum problem was partly social and partly economic and said on this point:

The sanitary reformer points to the regularity with which the rates of mortality in districts vary in proportion to the density of the residents. "The greater the proximity of man to man the greater the mortality". This might be illustrated by the statistics of tuberculosis and of the deaths of infants under one year of age. And the sanitary authorities in Edinburgh claim that the mortality figures would rapidly go down if the people were housed under different and improved conditions. It is plain that one part of the remedy consists in a drastic reduction in the density—which is one of the first purposes of an Improvement Scheme and is rigidly enforced by the Scottish Board of Health.

The pessimist, however, will still insist that slums are made, not by landlords, but by tenants; that dirty and dissolute people will always be with us; and that there are individuals so degenerate that they

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\* See *Housing Betterment*, September, 1920, p. 221.

would create a ruin in Buckingham Palace if they were given it as a habitation. No doubt such people do exist, and will continue to exist; and the problem of the wastrels of society is a difficult one. But every step in the march of progress has been difficult.

### THE ECONOMIC FACTOR

The economic problem is another difficulty. There are financial reasons which compel many people to live in slums; rents there are low; the situations are central; there are facilities for cheap shopping. It is quite different in the new areas to which they are transplanted. The new houses are built on open sites and fitted with modern conveniences which cost money, so that rents must be comparatively high. It is practically impossible to obtain sites in proximity to workshops and the cost of transit is a serious deterrent. The shops cannot be so convenient for the housewife. The significance of these and other drastic changes in the lives of the tenants varies so greatly that the experience in one locality may be quite different from the experience in another.

In Edinburgh an area has been provided at Lochend, upon which 150 apartments of 2-rooms and 650 of 3-rooms have been built to accommodate the tenants dispossessed in the Cowgate, Grassmarket and Leith Schemes. These houses have been readily taken up by Leith tenants, but have not proved attractive to the others. The average tenant in Leith found that Lochend was within reasonable distance from his place of employment and his income was sufficient to meet the new rent.

### EARNINGS OF TENANTS CONSIST OF PARISH RELIEF

The earnings of the Cowgate tenants were on a much lower plane and consisted in many cases of parish relief. In that area a tradesman was practically unknown, and while there were numerous casual laborers, the majority of the tenants earned what they could by 'hawking'—old clothes being their mainstay.

The new rents have been fixed with the consent of the Scottish Board of Health at about 50% of the normal rents—being £12 per annum, or 6s. per week including rates (taxes) for two-room apartments; and £15 per annum, or 7s. 6d. per week including rates for three-room apartments. In addition to these rooms each apartment has a bathroom and scullery.

### CLOSE SUPERVISION AND EDUCATION NECESSARY

In order to maintain the houses in a satisfactory state, an Inspector of Works is in daily attendance. For the purpose of supervising housewives who might otherwise be careless or negligent, a female inspector has been detailed from the Sanitary Department.

The Inspector of Works has an office at Lochend, where complaints are received. Frequently these relate to private quarrels in which the Inspector cannot intervene. It was discovered that some tenants did not attend to their gardens for lack of tools and these are now being lent out by the Inspector. Prizes are given by the Corporation for the best-kept gardens and this has stimulated an interest which is spreading. Some of the efforts are amusing; for example, digging down 4 or 5 feet and bringing up subsoil on which nothing would grow, while at the same time endangering the safety of the buildings. At



first some tenants were inclined to empty their household refuse and ashes on the gardens instead of putting them out on the street for removal by the dust cart.

#### REPAIR CHARGES HEAVY

It is found that while the rents are the lowest in the Improvement Schemes of the Corporation the maintenance costs are the highest. Chimneys are frequently set on fire in lieu of being swept. The plaster on the walls is frequently damaged, so that the City Architect has suggested that the ideal house would be one without timber, with solid concrete on the floors, walls, and ceilings. It would also be ideal to have unbreakable glass in windows. The trouble of clearing choked drains has been mitigated by screwing down all surface gratings and manhole covers and this has prevented the tenants from throwing empty tins and similar articles into the drains.

To keep down vermin the bedding, etc., of the tenants as they flit is treated at the public disinfectory; but this is not practicable in the case of many articles of furniture. When a tenant leaves a new house it is the practice to spray the house with a strong disinfectant to destroy the vermin left behind. The baths are really being used, as intended. The tenants find them especially useful for their children, and the assumption that they are used for storing coal or keeping animals is not correct. There is no licensed premises (for sale of drink—Editor) in any of the Corporation housing areas.

The female inspector makes a systematic visitation of the houses, this being considered essential if the best results are to be obtained. Special attention is given to backward tenants and those who are a trouble to their neighbors. Many matters have come under her notice relating to the homes and their surroundings; but by encouragement, persuasion, practical advice and where necessary by sterner methods—an elevating process has been proceeding and a gratifying improvement achieved. On the whole, the results are satisfactory beyond anticipation.

#### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE POOREST ELEMENTS IN THE SLUM?

However satisfactory this rehousing may be, it should be borne in mind that the subject does not end here. When slum properties are closed and demolished it is—after all—only the élite of the inhabitants who are transferred to the new houses.

What is to happen to the others? Are they to be allowed to drift into other areas, already overcrowded, without any effort being made to improve their lot? If nothing is done for these people, then it is plain that the Corporation is itself creating a slum problem which will require to be faced sooner or later. To this extent Improvement Schemes are deficient, as they make no provision at all for this relatively large section of the slum dwellers, who, apparently, are to be pushed out and allowed to fall into slum conditions in other districts.

These inhabitants may be divided into two categories—good and bad. And it may be commented that the Corporation owes some duty to both and should not merely turn its back on them. Among the former, there are single men and women and aged persons, who presently occupy one room and are unable out of their limited means to afford more. The latter include dissolute and degenerate individuals

who cannot be reformed under existing conditions and do not wish to be reformed.\*\*\*\*\*

The undesirable class referred to above have been—or will be—sifted out. Their numbers vary—being more in one area and less in another—but they are always considerable. They simply go elsewhere and the same people will be met with in successive Schemes and be hunted from one slum to another.

If the day should ever come when there are no more slums to which they can retreat, what then is likely to happen? At present that stage is far away and the future may be left to provide for itself.

This testimony as to the difficulties involved in re-housing under decent conditions people who have lived for many years in slums is reenforced by the experience of Dr. A. S. M. Mac Gregor, the Medical Officer of Health in another large Scottish city, Glasgow. Speaking on this same occasion of slum clearance work in that city he said, among other things:

It was not, however, sufficient to transfer these people to new houses and then leave them alone. They require close supervision. It was usually found that about 60% of the families reached a good standard; 30% might be classed as intermediates and likely to rise or fall; while the remaining 10% belonged to the "difficult" category. But the proportion of incorrigibles was really very small.

That the problem is not so simple as merely moving people from one environment to another and expecting them to change their whole nature is borne out by the experience of Hull, England.

The people of that city were recently shocked to learn—as, indeed were the people of all England—that in the new housing schemes in that city where people had been moved from slums to modern cottages with wide streets, gardens and well-planned living accommodations, it had been necessary in a single year to serve 11,000 summonses—for non-payment of rent—on one housing estate alone.

## NEW LIGHT ON SLUMS

### DO THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED MAKE THE SLUMS?

The problem of Slum Clearance—at no time a simple one—is unnecessarily complicated by the lack of agreement upon what constitutes a slum. In England a slum officially—although the name is not known to the law—is an area or district in which the buildings are unfit for human habitation and in such condition that in the interest of public health they should be destroyed.

But, unfortunately, both in England and elsewhere the popular idea of a slum is something quite different. It has become the fashion in recent years—with the advent of large numbers of well-intentioned



but uninformed persons into the field of housing reform—to designate as a slum practically every residential quarter of a city occupied by workingmen that has not been built within very recent years. A street consisting of unending rows of houses all alike, drab in appearance, without architectural style or qualities, and monotonous in both line, color and scale, has come to be designated as a slum. Of course it is no such thing.

In England the Labor men have rather seemed to glory in the fact that there are slums—due perhaps to a very human desire to show that they have individually triumphed over their adverse early environment and reached the position they now occupy. This is a very natural and human feeling and it should be encouraged and not discouraged.

In America the reverse is the case. Call any section of a city there a slum, and at once all of the inhabitants of that district rise in their wrath, and threaten all sorts of dire harm, politically, to the rash public official who was so indiscreet as to use the term. Social workers too are quick to take umbrage at the suggestion that the people who live in such sections are not just as good, inherently, as those who live in other parts of the city.

The problem, therefore, is somewhat complicated. Advocates of measures for housing reform have found it helpful to their cause to refer to the conditions they wish to remedy as slum conditions. The word seems to have a magic significance. It is so easy to enlist sentiment in support of measures for slum improvement or slum eradication—irrespective of the means that may be employed. So it is not strange that various groups of persons, wishing to improve housing conditions, horrified and shocked by some of them—which they encounter for the first time—should try to rally support for their cause by the slogan of “Slum Clearance”.

It is not, however, by any such ill-considered or unscientific methods that slums will be abolished in England—or in America, or in any other country. Only by careful, rational, intelligent study of the causes that have made actual slums, and the methods by which they can be cured or prevented, will permanent results be achieved.

Before, therefore, weighing or assessing the relative advantages of various measures put forth as remedies for slum conditions, one must clear one’s mind of any preconceptions or misapprehensions as to what slums are, as to what causes them, and how they can be done away with.

We are glad to say that there is beginning to emerge from the discussion of this subject in England a new understanding of the fundamentals of this problem.

## WHAT MAKES SLUMS

When it comes to determining what makes slums there is great diversity of view. No one has ever tried to ascertain the facts as a result of careful scientific research, but different people have expressed their views and opinions.

While the discussion of the causes of things is often unprofitable, it is not so in this case. For, one must have an intelligent understanding of the factors that have brought about slums before one can assay the value of the remedies proposed for them.

The causes of the English slums, as seen by W. L. Hare, editor of *Garden Cities and Town Planning*, are summarized as follows:

We may trace the slum to a complex of causes. Natural decay draws a house from its one-time comfort and decency; if it has been cheaply built it goes swiftly on its downward path. Inadequate repair hastens the pace. Haphazard planning of towns and cities drives industries and dwellings into one zone instead of two, while congestion of many houses makes each one less desirable, and overcrowding makes them unhealthy and uncomfortable. Dirt on the clothes and person—inevitable in many vocations—brings parasites and the misery they cause. Meanwhile economic influences operate on slums from two directions: the landlord in the first place often cannot afford to bring his property into full repair because his rent-income is insufficient; in the second phase of his ownership he can afford to see it degenerate because, at its dismal and inevitable end, he sees great reward for his patience.

The average person seeing slum conditions for the first time generally rushes to the belief that the slum is caused by the negligent landlord. On the other hand, the property-owner who for years has battled with disorderly and disreputable tenants is liable to attribute the cause of the slums to the habits of the people who live in his houses. The truth lies between these two. The neglectful landlord and the disorderly and filthy tenant are both factors.

Out of the greater discussion of this question and the bringing to the problem of new minds, there has come to light a great deal of new knowledge.

One of the most interesting postulates as to the causes of slums and the difficulty of dealing with their inhabitants, was brought out in a conference on Slum areas, held in London a little over a year ago by the Association of Municipal Corporations, in which leading officials and people with practical experience in dealing with the problem, came together and pooled those experiences and shared their views.

One of the persons who participated in that discussion was Dr. A. M. N. Pringle, the medical officer of health of Ipswich, England. He startled his hearers by pointing out that the slum dweller on the



whole is composed of the mentally retarded or mentally defective group in the community, who are unable to achieve that standard in home-making that is expected of the average person.

Speaking from his own experience as a medical officer of health, he said:

All slums have this in common that the people who occupy them do so because they are unable through their economic position to find the rent for a better house. No one lives in a slum for choice. \*\*\*\*\*

There are many factors which contribute to the non-economic position of the slum dweller; but amongst these there is one which I have not yet seen mentioned but to which I am going to lead you, if I may, with a certain amount of temerity, because I fear that it is quite possible that what I am going to say may be misinterpreted. Possibly you will say that does not matter, and I am quite prepared to agree with that. I refer to the people who for physical and mental reasons are incapable of earning wages sufficient to pay the economic rentals demanded at the present day. I am not going to deal with the physical, but I want just for a moment to look at the position from the mental point of view.

#### 10% OF THE POPULATION MENTALLY RETARDED

In the first place, I would call your attention to the report issued by the chief medical officer to the Board of Education in which it is stated that there is evidence that something like—at the very least—10% of the school population can be classified as either mentally dull or mentally retarded. That may not convey a very considerable impression to your minds, but consider what 10% of 5,000,000 school children represents. The moment you think of that you see at once that you are up against a tremendous proposition.

#### THESE BECOME THE SLUM DWELLERS

In the course of time these children pass out into the general labor market; they do not pass out into the general labor market equipped mentally so as to be able to compete on equal terms with their fellow workers. The result of that is that they are driven down into the lowest stratum of the employed people. And these are the people whom you find in the slums. These are the people who form the centre of your slum problem. And these are the people with whom you will be called upon to deal. They are handicapped from the outset and they remain handicapped. Their position never becomes fully economic; they are the people who are taken on when work is booming and sacked the moment that work becomes slack. They are always on the poverty line, and are always in the position that they are unable to find a sufficient amount of money to provide food—and, of course, not sufficient to provide rent.

#### THE MENTALLY RETARDED GIRL MAKES THE SLUM HOME

That is the position with regard to the wage-earner. What is the position with regard to the girl?—the girl who is mentally below the normal, one of the 10 per cent? In the course of time she marries and marries into her own class and her own type. She is then confronted

with this difficulty—she has to expend an extremely small wage to the best advantage. Mentally she is not capable of the effort. It would require a genius to make the wages of an unskilled laborer carry all that it is called upon to carry. She cannot do it; and what is the result? Go into any slum you like in any town you like, and you will see there the effect of futility and mismanagement. These are the women whose homes are filthy. You do not find a woman who is properly equipped mentally who will be content to live in a filthy house. Go into any slum area you like. If you go into one house you will find it is as clean as a new pin, while if you go into the next house you will find filth, disorder, mismanagement and incompetence everywhere. That is the type of woman.

We think Dr. Pringle has put his finger on one of the big factors in the slum situation. Social workers in every country will—we feel sure—recognize the accuracy of his diagnosis. In all great cities, there is a residue of the population who are constituted as he describes, and to whose lack of mental equipment may be traced the responsibility for so many situations that exist.

Some of these individuals should not of course be allowed to attempt to run their own lives. For many of them the only safe and wise place is an institution; for others training and education will help.

They would seem to be the “Submerged Tenth” of Charles Booth’s time.

### THE HOUSING OF “UNDESIRABLE FAMILIES”

From Holland there comes to us an account of a most interesting effort made by the Government in that country to house what they have the courage to describe as “undesirable families.” We wonder whether we in America would either have the courage to tackle the job of housing this class in a community of special houses suited to their needs and standards of living; and whether, if we did, we would be honest enough to admit that there are such things as “undesirable families”. Heretofore, we have shuddered with horror—at least our public officials have, as have many others—at the mere mention of the word “slums”, and at the thought of designating any group of people in the community as slum-dwellers.

What has happened in Holland is, that the Government, having taken upon its shoulders the task of housing the entire population, has, after a few years experience in that manifold obligation, reached the conclusion that there are certain groups in the community whose housing is fraught with difficulty, and who cannot be simply placed in modern new dwellings and left to themselves, with the hope and expectation that they will use, rather than abuse, them, and that from that time on there will be no more slums.



C. F. Dellez, of Hengelo, Holland, has a most interesting account of this work in a recent issue of *Garden Cities and Town Planning*, presented in an admirable translation by Miss E. A. Charlesworth of London. After pointing out that the term "undesirable families" as a description of families whose unsocial behavior prevents them from inhabiting a dwelling properly is by no means a new one, the writer disposes of the idea that if temporary housing can be found for this class of persons, all will come right in the long run. He says:

But we cannot be satisfied with so simple a solution of the problem. In addition, public opinion has been awakened to the importance of this question and does not easily forget the condition of things which has been revealed. The conditions under which these families live can no longer be tolerated, now that the demoralising influence of bad housing is understood. This unsatisfactory condition may not be so obvious when the housing shortage has been met to a considerable extent; but while there are slums these people will live in them, and that is most undesirable. If slums are condemned the inhabitants are homeless and are still a problem for the housing authority.

The problem of ensuring the proper use of houses which they have provided is one which faces every housing authority, public and voluntary. The Housing Associations have endeavoured to control the use of their dwellings, by laying down tenancy rules, to which all tenants must comply, both in regard to their dwelling and to their own conduct. But rules imposed from above are not of much avail. The next measure to be adopted was regular supervision, the form and extent of which depended upon the kind of tenants. Bad dwellings make bad tenants, but bad tenants in their turn make bad dwellings. Improvement must be attempted from both sides.

In the first press of the housing shortage the notion prevailed that if here and there a few dwellings were erected especially for the undesirables, nothing more would be needed. But it was soon seen that such a remedy was no better—if not actually worse—than the disease.

We come then to a new question—that of the class for whom there is no possibility of redemption. This is a question that up to now only very few communes have taken into consideration—either, because they have not realised that it exists; or because, being difficult of solution, it is put on one side.

#### WHO ARE THE UNDESIRABLES?

Yet every Housing Society and other public authority which undertakes this task is bound to find that different treatment is required by this last-mentioned category—the incurable—from that adopted for the undesirable as a whole. Dwellings for the undesirable are, generally speaking, to be regarded as temporary habitations, never as permanent abiding places.

In the first instance they serve as "observation stations" for all social wrecks who seek shelter—the backward, the feeble, the irresponsible, those who are unemployed through lack of sufficient energy, the drinkers (not necessarily drunkards), the indifferent and careless, the unthrifty, slatternly housewives, and persons with some mental defect owing to which they can never become normal. These families cannot

perhaps be called wholly undesirable, but it is easy for them to slip into this category: they do not fit into ordinary surroundings and they have great difficulty in the open market in finding suitable shelter. Economically they can seldom stand upon their own feet.

#### THE LOWEST STRATUM

And then one comes, almost without transition, to families who are a shade worse; the hopelessly dirty, the quarrelsome, the vagrants, the dissolute, those who will not pay their way, the women who will not stay at home and are not fit to do their housework, and indeed hardly see the need of doing it—in a word, the degenerate of every form.

These are, as a rule, easier to reclaim, but the special dwelling for the undesirable is the only place in which they can properly be tested.

#### REALLY AN INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM

Should they, in spite of all efforts, prove unable to reach the standard of normal life, they must still be provided for in some way; but so long as we have in our country no workhouses or prison asylums and no power to confine drunkards, so long must shelter be provided for such persons. This shelter must be of the simplest character—a refuge for the homeless in one form or another, not a dwelling of their own. It is not possible as a rule in such cases to maintain the family as such. It is a question of protecting such persons against themselves and society against them.

Mr. Dellez points out that the majority of local authorities in Holland do nothing to grapple with this problem of providing a special kind of housing accommodation for this class in the community. The reason for this he attributes to the fact that it does not seem necessary in rural areas, that other authorities do not think it a function for the public authorities, and that others see no practical solution of the problem. Apparently, Amsterdam and The Hague are the two cities which have thus far carried out any practical plans for coping with this situation, though other and smaller communities have been discussing the subject for some time past. He says:

In Amsterdam the communal authority itself has taken the problem in hand on a large scale. Two separate groups of houses have been provided especially for the undesirable—one at Asterdorp (120 dwellings), and the second at Zeeburgerdorp (58 dwellings). Neither group is fully inhabited.

The municipal Housing Department, helped by an advisory committee, administers these houses and selects such families as according to the judgment of the women managers should be placed under observation—that is, not those of whose improvement there is no hope, nor those who are a source of danger to others, and again, not those who are judged to be too good for these surroundings.



## CLOSELY SUPERVISED LIVING

Of those selected all who do not wish to be placed under observation are allowed to go into a temporary house. This means that they cannot stay there very long. No rent is paid for these dwellings, but families may stay there for a certain time by paying a contribution towards the cost. The dwellings have a good living-room, tiny kitchen, and 2 to 4 sleeping-rooms, according to the size of the family. When empty the dwellings have a fresh and pleasing impression; inhabited by a dirty family they are almost unrecognisable. Washing is done in a common washhouse to which two bathrooms are attached. The supervision is in the hands of a manageress who exercises what may be called "intensive supervision" and co-operates with all social institutions which concern themselves with the reclamation of families or individuals. Instruction in domestic economy is given in a club house.

The families who go away from these dwellings, i. e., who will not allow themselves to be reclaimed, pass out of the care of the communal authority as such. They are often forced to go into the shelter for the homeless. Here they no longer live a family life, men, women, and children being separately cared for. At the time of writing the report, only a few dwellings in the Asterdorp were occupied, as they had not long been brought into use, and by no means all were occupied at Zeeburg.

## HOUSED IN "COMPLEXES"

According to Mr. Dellez, Amsterdam is not the only community that has done effective work in this respect. The Hague has made equally generous provisions with Amsterdam, though the system there is in one respect different. At The Hague these people are housed in so-called "controlled dwellings"; this has been the case since 1923. These dwellings form a complete "complex", consisting of first, second and third class dwellings. The term "complex" is not used in the Freudian sense, but refers to a composite type of building.

These dwellings are described by Mr. Dellez as follows:

The first class lie on the outer edge of the block and can be entered without passing the janitor; the second—like the first—have a tiny garden, and the third class houses are wholly separated from the outside of the building and are continuously under the control of the janitor's lodge.

By good conduct it is possible for a family to pass from the third through the second to the first class, while after a stay of about one year the inhabitants are forced by continual but gentle pressure to seek a normal dwelling. Baths, club-rooms and children's playing places are provided.

## A CURFEW FOR ADULTS

The inhabitants must be inside the "complex" by 9 in winter and by 10 in summer; in practice late-comers are noted and their names reported to the Director. There is a good deal of supervision, a director, manageress and janitor—and even deputies for these persons.

Naturally this strong control is not liked by unruly inhabitants, but to those who are well disposed every opportunity is given to raise themselves to a better way of living. The manageress sees that the houses are kept clean and that the rent is paid regularly. The payment of rent is insisted upon, though perhaps not strongly enough. A payment of 4 to 5 florins (about \$2.00) is asked for the dwellings—which is not of course an economic rent.

Each dwelling contains a living-room and kitchen, 3 sleeping rooms and a store place. The construction is of a very simple character and of material which cannot be easily injured. The arrangement, the method of building, and necessary staff make this Hague method very expensive. It costs 585 florins (\$234) per dwelling per year—apart from the interest on capital—but, as it is believed that the effect on the children will be to bring them up as orderly citizens the money is perhaps well spent. Unless this proves to be the case, it is a question whether the communal authority should spend so much money upon it; but it is impossible to say yet what the result will be.

Should families be turned out of these dwellings, the communal authority does nothing more for them. There are, however, two shelters for the homeless—in one of which men; and, in the other, women and children find refuge.

According to Mr. Dellez, no single satisfactory solution for the difficult problem, covering all its aspects, has as yet been found. He says:

It is only a question of which plan involves the least danger. It is an advantage that different municipalities seek the solution each in a different way, since one can learn from the experience of the other. But it must not be forgotten that a plan which meets the requirements in one municipality is not necessarily suitable for another, and in any case must be adopted with great caution.

Much discretion is needed in considering the different systems. The essential requirement is that every Association or municipality which embarks on a new plan must first of all determine whether their object is the mere provision of shelter, or the safeguarding of society, or the reclamation of bad tenants.

#### SUPERVISION ESSENTIAL

A few general hints which every Association or municipality taking this matter in hand should consider are as follows: Temporary building for this class of persons will perhaps prevent much undesirability, provided always that there is good supervision.

But still there is the question what shall be done with those who are unwilling or unable to keep to the rules of these special dwellings, and also with the homeless, the irreclaimable and the undesirable.

For these categories tactful, firm supervision—preferably by a manageress—should be provided. As the success of the work largely depends on her, the standard in this respect cannot be put too high. To build dwellings for undesirable persons without supervision is senseless and inexcusable.

The regular moving up of the families as they improve is necessary. The scheme for housing undesirables should be a temporary

measure and should not aim at providing a permanent dwelling-place for them, whilst for persons of whom no improvement is to be expected definite provision must be made. But in this case one must go beyond the ordinary conception of "housing".

These efforts in Holland to deal with "undesirable families" are indicative of the lengths to which one must go when the State takes upon its shoulders the responsibility for the housing of its people.

## ENGLAND'S EXPERIENCE WITH SLUMS

A little over a year ago, there was held at Westminster in London a conference on Slum Areas that is probably the most valuable discussion of this subject that has been had in any country.

The conference was held by the Association of Municipal Corporations of England, and represented the coming together of those public officials throughout England who are dealing with this difficult problem—and many of whom have been dealing with it for years. The conference lasted for two days. It was attended by 452 representatives from 160 different localities throughout England and Wales, and included in those representatives generally an alderman or councillor, or both, the medical officer of health, the town clerk and, possibly, the mayor, as well as frequently the city engineer and surveyor, the clerk to the public works committee, the borough surveyor, and even in some cases the leading financial officer. It is thus seen that there was brought together on this occasion to discuss this important question probably the most representative group of persons that could have been brought together qualified from knowledge and experience to discuss it.

Every student of housing in America—and especially every person interested in the difficult question of Slum Clearance—will find it desirable to obtain a copy of the Report of the Proceedings of this Conference—a book of 150 pages including Papers and Discussions—which presumably can be obtained by addressing the Association of Municipal Corporations in London.

In addition to these official delegates, there were also present by invitation Frank Hunt, the Valuer of the London County Council, and Raymond Unwin—the two men in England, outside of this group, who could best aid them.

We regret that limitations of space do not permit us to quote at length from the very valuable discussions of this important question that were had on this occasion. We give, however, a few "nuggets", hoping that these will at least whet the appetite of our readers for the full Proceedings.



ALDERMAN MILES MITCHELL, Deputy Chairman Housing Committee,  
Manchester.

So many people argue that it is impossible for the people who are living under these conditions to pay a reasonable and proper rent for the house which they need. We are having some analyses made and are getting out some figures from an actual slum clearance to discover what the real ability to pay rent is—how many people who are in these areas could afford to pay, how nearly they can get to paying for the accommodation they actually need. I think subsequently we may discover that there is not such a great difficulty on that phase of the subject as many of us believe.

DR. A. A. MUSSEN, Medical Officer of Health, Liverpool.

Another point is the difficulty of dealing with tenants who go into this new property. Some people think that once you have provided new houses for these slum dwellers, your duty is at an end. Now that is far from the case; some of the very fine dwellings that corporations have provided have become in regard to cleanliness little better than slum houses.

DR. A. M. N. PRINGLE, Medical Officer of Health of Ipswich.

No one lives in a slum for choice. Therefore the essence of this problem is poverty.\*

DR. VEITCH CLARK, Medical Officer of Health, Manchester.

Rehousing on these areas should be confined to people who cannot live elsewhere, and should not be extended to any others.

#### THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF SUBSIDY—RENTS—TAXES.

ANDREW MACLAREN, M.P., Councillor, Stoke-on-Trent.

Sloppy sentimentality will not solve any economic problem. \*\*\*\*\* Housing subsidies so far have not solved the problem; housing subsidies have played into the hands of little gangs of profiteers round the building materials and have aggravated the problem. \*\*\*\*\* The subsidy comes down to an authority and then you send out the rate collector (tax collector), to take the subsidy back for rates. \*\*\*\*\* The moment you add the rates (taxes) to the house, you throw the house out of the reach of the working man who can afford to pay 10s. a week. \*\*\*\*

Re-conditioning houses is a waste of public money. \*\*\* That is the vicious crime of your rating law (taxing law) in this country, that you rate men according to the condition of their property in its present state. The assessor says to the slum owner: "Have you been doing anything here during the past five years?" "No", says the slum owner, "all is the same as when you were here, and in fact worse." And says Lloyd George, acting under the rating law of England, I

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\* For further quotations from Dr. Pringle, see article, pages 122-124.

take the slum property owner by the hand and I say to him: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, go down to the rate office and have your rates reduced 50 per cent." \*\*\* That is the rating law of England. If you do not use the land of England, you pay no rates; if you use the land for better housing, you have to pay high rates.

COUNCILLOR LECKIE of Walsall.

But the whole question rests upon where the money is to come from.

### THE PUBLIC CONSCIENCE STIRRED

ALDERMAN MILES E. MITCHELL, of Manchester.

Why is it we have this general and widespread interest? My own view is that it is because the conscience of the Nation is pricked as it never was before. \*\*\*\*\* The answer is that the people in this country have come to the decision that it is not right that so many of their fellow citizens should be compelled by circumstances to continue to live under their present conditions. \*\*\*\*\* It is now recognized that the existence of slums is not only wrong but a disgrace to modern civilization, and that for the sake of those who hitherto have been compelled to live in them it is contrary to public policy that the slums should continue a day longer than circumstances compel. \*\*\*\*\*

The housing of the working classes whose wages fall below a definite standard has never been really satisfactory. \*\*\*\*\*

The path of housing progress is strewn with well-intended but ill-conceived schemes. Emotion has run away with reason and judgment. There will be equal disaster if to-day we act on the assumption that we can clear away the slums and their attendant evils in a short space of time and without creating other evils.

### HOUSING AND HEALTH

DR. A. A. MUSSEN, Medical Officer of Health, Liverpool.

The influence of dwellings on the health of the community living in them was one of the first of the environmental factors to be studied in public health investigations and certain housing conditions were at an early period shown to be definitely prejudicial to the health of those living under them. These conditions are, generally speaking, bad ventilation and consequent lack of fresh air; lack of sunlight due to inadequate open-air space round the dwelling; dampness due to bad construction or defects in the roof, walls, etc.; insufficient water supply, leading to uncleanness in the house and of the inmates; and the absence of proper sanitary accommodation and means of disposal of liquid or solid refuse. \*\*\*\*\*

It is not suggested that there are not many other factors which determine the difference in death rates, but there can be no doubt that bad housing conditions are amongst the chief causes on which a very large proportion of the sickness and mortality found in these congested areas depends.

## WHAT SLUM CLEARANCE HAS ACTUALLY COST

FRANK HUNT, Valuer, London County Council.

In order to indicate a comparison between the cost of clearance schemes within certain definite periods of time, I have taken out the total cost of clearance schemes in London from the time of the passing of the first of Cross's Acts in 1875 up to a scheme approved in 1899. The total gross cost of clearance—including trade compensation—amounted to just over £2,800,000, and the number of persons of the working-class who were living in these areas at the time of condemnation was nearly 42,000. The cost of clearance, measured per person to be displaced, works out at something under £70.

A similar series of figures, calculated in respect of London schemes undertaken since 1919, in which some 23,370 persons were to be displaced, were—at a close estimate of cost excluding trade compensation—expected to work out to be a figure of expenditure of £1,050,000, or an average cost of about £45 per person displaced. If trade compensation had been paid in these cases it would probably have resulted in raising the figure to at least £50 per person displaced. In neither case is the cost of the new buildings erected in lieu of those destroyed included, the figures being only in respect of acquisition and clearance.

## THE TAX BOOMERANG

A. B. GRIFFITHS, City Treasurer, Sheffield and R. G. NICHOLSON, Borough Treasurer, Rotherham.

There is another financial aspect of this question which should be mentioned. Local authorities generally are feeling anxious about any schemes which will involve substantial additions to their rate expenditure (taxes), on account of the uncertainty of the effect of the Local Government Bill now before Parliament. The incidence of local taxation is being materially altered, and an increase in rate-borne expenditure which necessitates the levying of a higher rate is going to be a serious matter to those classes of ratepayers who may be described as "non-industrial".\*\*\*\*\*

Local authorities have not availed themselves of the State assistance offered in either Act to any appreciable extent, only about 100 schemes having been approved to date, involving the demolition of less than 15,000 houses, and the re-housing of about 70,000 persons.\*\*\*\*\*

From inquiries which we have made we gather that, generally speaking, local authorities have not prepared definite programmes for dealing with their unhealthy areas in the immediate future. We were informed, however, that the city of Bristol estimates that capital expenditure of over £2,000,000 will be required to deal with their particular area, and 50% of the charges to be borne will require a rate of 5d. in the £. We mention this fact to illustrate that the cost of dealing with the slum problem is going to be a serious addition to our present housing commitments.\*\*\*\*\*



## SUBSIDIES UNSOUND

We are not unmindful of the fact that sooner or later the housing problem must be placed upon an economic basis by the gradual disappearance of Government subsidies, and that our suggestion of an increased Government grant is opposed to present tendencies, but we are of opinion that the last phase of the housing problem to which these counsels of perfection should be applied is the one which we are considering. We are convinced that if the object for which this Conference has been assembled is to be accomplished within a reasonable period of years, it will be necessary to distribute the cost upon the widest possible basis, and to call upon the taxpayer to bear a larger proportion of the burden than 50 per cent.\*\*\*\*\*

It therefore becomes necessary to re-house the tenants on sites situated on the outskirts of the town, probably a considerable distance from their work. The result is that, in consequence of present-day building costs, the unfortunate tenant—who is usually a small wage earner—is asked to pay double the rent which he was previously paying, plus anything up to 2s. per week to cover travelling expenses to and from his work.

The proffered alternative accommodation will probably be refused and the displaced tenants crowd into other dwellings in the neighborhood. If it is accepted, the tenant generally falls hopelessly into arrears with his rent and the local authority has eventually to apply to the court for an ejectment order, with the resultant costs in addition to loss of rent.

## UNFAIR COMPENSATION AN OBSTACLE

GRAHAM WILSON, Deputy Town Clerk, Kingston-upon-Hull.

It cannot be gainsaid that the provisions of section 46 (as to compensation—Editor) are regarded as most unfair by many local authorities and this fact has—together with other factors—undoubtedly led to many local authorities delaying the putting forward of schemes, in the hope that the section will be amended in some way more equitable to owners. Whilst it is, of course, quite true to say that the responsibility of making representations with regard to slum areas is on the medical officer of health, the present state of the law with regard to compensation places these officers under the obligation of either countenancing the continuance of what may be the most deplorable housing conditions, or taking action which will, to their knowledge, lead to the certain impoverishment—or even ruin—of some of the owners of the property concerned.

RAYMOND UNWIN.

Advancing civilization has progressively added to the apparatus of life and increased the minimum of space and equipment necessary in a dwelling to enable the average family to live in the manner which society must demand. The wigwam might serve to shelter the very primitive life of the Indian living in the wild and open country; any attempt to live a modern urban life in a wigwam must rapidly turn it into a pestilential quagmire.\*\*\*

## COTTAGES ON THE OUTSKIRTS FAVORED

It appears that re-housing on the site is likely to be the more costly method, to the extent of about £300 per dwelling in London, and, perhaps, £200 in smaller towns.\*\*\*\*\*

The difference means that if a local authority is to let to a slum occupier a tenement dwelling built on the cleared site, at the same rent at which a cottage on the outskirts could be let to him, or to another tenant who might make room for him, an additional subsidy, either from the State or the rates, varying from £10 to £15 per annum, must be forthcoming.\*\*\*\*\*

If the standard life of the slum dweller is to be improved, something more is needed than to transfer him from dwellings which—in spite of their dirt and squalor—often have some picturesque individuality, into a series of barrack blocks, which—in spite of their sanitary condition—may lack every element of attractiveness or beauty.\*\*\*\*\*

## WORDS OF WISDOM

MR. UNWIN summarizes his conclusions as follows:

(1) The duty to provide housing for displaced slum dwellers cannot be discharged properly if regarded as one isolated problem.

(2) It depends mainly on completing the elimination of positive house shortage. After all that has been accomplished towards this end, to slacken off the house building programme so as just to fall short of an adequate supply of dwellings, would surely be as futile as it would be disastrous to the prospect of effective slum clearance.

(3) The duty to the displaced involves providing for each family a dwelling which in accommodation, equipment and amenity will encourage the average occupant to live up to a good standard of decency.

(4) Such new dwellings can be provided more cheaply and with other great advantages outside the towns.

(5) Available evidence warrants the assumption that if adequate dwellings are provided, sufficient of the people of this country desire to live in self-contained cottages with gardens, to leave comfortable space in the central areas for those who must—or who prefer—to live there. The outward movement of population has been very pronounced.

(6) No permanent conditions have arisen which call for—much less justify—the continued congestion of population when re-building takes place in central areas.

(7) Whether for cottage dwellings or flats, reasonable standards of accommodation, density and amenity are now well known. No savings can be made by cutting these standards—which can be regarded as economical—in view of the present injury to the health or comfort of the occupants and the certain future depreciation in the value of the investments.

(8) Only as parts of comprehensive re-planning and zoning schemes can slum clearance be tackled wisely, effectively or economically.

(9) Existing houses vacated by those who will move into new cottages when erected, afford by far the most economical and convenient provision in which to re-house those occupants of cleared houses who are not themselves able to move out of the central area. This applies equally whether the best interests of the town require the cleared areas to be zoned for dwellings, industry, commerce or open space.

(10) Re-conditioning—if wisely adopted for those grades of dwellings which are still rather better than slum houses—combined with the allotting of a conditional lease of life, skilled management, and regular maintenance, may make a considerable contribution to satisfactory re-housing and may prevent large areas from further degenerating into slum conditions. It is necessary to the complete solution of the housing problem that adequate powers should be conferred on local authorities, or other suitable bodies, to enable this work to be handled efficiently.

(11) When vacated dwellings cannot be made available and special buildings must be erected to provide temporary houses. These should be so designed that, having served their temporary purpose, they will make good dwellings of adequate size. It is better to divide such adequate units for the temporary purpose than to erect dwellings below the adequate standard.

(12) In all classes of housing or re-housing the skill and care required to secure good design and amenity of arrangement are essential to success. There is no economy in careless planning or in ugly buildings; both are equally signs of incompetence.

From which it appears that England is the country from which most can be learned with regard to the problem of Slum Clearance, the difficulties involved in it and the methods to be employed in surmounting those difficulties.

## GREATER LONDON

The first Report of the London Regional Planning Committee has recently been published. The report is not only valuable in itself but has especial interest for American students of Regional Planning, as illustrative of the differences in methods of approach to the problem in England and America. No greater contrast could possibly be found than this Report and the monumental work of the Regional Plan of New York.

While this is the first Report of the London group and admittedly deals only with certain aspects of their problems it is none the less distinctive of the methods of work that prevail in that country and of the conception that obtains over there of the tasks that confront them.

In a very attractively printed book of 50 pages, copiously illustrated with plans, maps, diagrams and photographs, the London Regional Planning Committee postulates some of its present and most



pressing problems. These may be summed up as the problems of Decentralization, Open Spaces and "Ribbon" Development.

Dealing with Decentralization the Committee has collected information in relation to the following aspects of their problem:

1. The existing industrial conditions in the area.
2. The probable developments in the near future.
3. The advantages and disadvantages of the decentralisation of industries, whether by the method of satellite towns or otherwise.
4. The means of counteracting any of the disadvantages of such decentralisation.
5. The possibilities of bringing about any removal of industries from the central districts.

Accompanying the Report of the Committee are a number of monographs submitted by its technical adviser, Raymond Unwin, on the following subjects:

Open Spaces, Ribbon Development and Sporadic Building, Additional Town Planning Powers Required, and Regional Planning Authority for Greater London.

In addition, the Report contains an appendix on the Pooling of Land in Germany under the *Lex Adickes* and other statutes, as well as a statement of the special assessment system as practiced in Kansas City.

Some of the technical journals in England state that the Report has "had a poor press", and they attribute this largely to the fact that the document presents its facts in somewhat technical fashion and thus repels the lay reader. They even comment on what they conceive to have been a psychological blunder in reproducing on the cover of the Report one of Mr. Unwin's diagrams for the development of London.

The Report would gain by greater compression and would undoubtedly have had wider appeal to the general public if it could have been revised by a skillful advertising or publicity man who could have expressed the same ideas in a way that would have more effectively "gotten them over" to the public.

Notwithstanding this limitation on its value, the Report is of the highest value to city planners and technicians in this field.

Every city planner in the United States will find it desirable to obtain a copy of the Report and study it with the greatest care.

Probably the most valuable part of the Report is Mr. Unwin's discussion of "Ribbon" Development and the remedy he suggests for it, both of which have very practical application for the United States.

In discussing the difficult question of obtaining and preserving a sufficient amount of Open Space around different communities, Mr.

Unwin advances the idea that some people lose when property is taken for such open space, while other owners of property benefit; and that at the present time under existing arrangements the community is made to pay twice for securing its open space. He suggests a pooling of land thus taken following in this respect the well known example of the *Lex Adickes* and other statutes in Germany.

We fear that the plan proposed by Mr. Unwin, sound as it is in theory, will not work out in practice and that it will be found difficult to get owners of property—which they have held for a rise in value for many years—to forego the profits that would naturally accrue to them, and hand them over, in part at least, to other property owners whose property is to be taken for the benefit of the community, and, incidentally, for the benefit of their own land. Of course, in England where much land is still held in large estates and where very often there are only a comparatively few owners to be dealt with, such a system of voluntary pooling of land may be possible. It would be extremely difficult to carry out in America, where land is not held in large estates but in small parcels.

All that Mr. Unwin has to say about “ribbon” development is most sound, and he has advocated a method of dealing with it which seems to us thoroughly practical. It is indeed folly for a country like England which holds among its chief assets the beauty of its countryside to allow that countryside to be spoiled by hap-hazard and ugly development, especially along the great arterial highways which the taxpayers have been taxed large sums of money to secure.

Mr. Unwin is entirely right when he points out that there is not only no reason for stringing little thin lines of cottages and other buildings along the sides of such highways but there is every reason against it. And his proposal to have the Government acquire strips of land adjacent to the highway, thus protecting the beauty of rural England, is most sound. The practical results achieved by this method in Westchester County indicate that conclusively.

We commend to all students of city planning and to all lovers of natural beauty a careful study of this most interesting book.

## A HOUSING TOUR IN DENMARK, SWEDEN AND NORWAY

The International Housing Association, of which Dr. Hans Kampffmeyer is General Secretary with offices at Frankfort-on-Main, is organizing a housing study-tour in Denmark, Sweden and Norway to start on August 12th and conclude on August 21st.

The tour starts in Copenhagen. It is planned to visit Gottenburg, Oslo and Stockholm, where a great Swedish Housing and Building Exposition is to be held this year. It is expected that the tour will give an unusual opportunity of seeing the best examples of house building and modern town planning in these countries. There will be lectures by leading experts and full opportunities for discussion, with active cooperation and help from the various local authorities and organizations interested in these fields. The cost of the tour will be 500 German marks for members of the Association, and 520 marks for non-members, including railway fares, motor trips, living expenses in first class hotels and tips. A deposit of 100 marks is required upon registering as a member of the party and the balance must be paid before the tour begins.

As the number of those that can be taken on this tour is somewhat limited, those who wish to go on it—should apply at once to Dr. H. Kampffmeyer, Hansa-Allee 27, Frankfort-on-Main, Germany.

## A NEW ATTACK ON THE SLUMS IN NEW YORK

After 84 years of more or less constant effort in attacking housing conditions the citizens of New York City once more gird their loins and announce a new battle with the slums.

With former Governor Alfred E. Smith as its President, and more than 60 civic and welfare leaders representing 25 different organizations, a new city-wide Housing Association has recently been formed in that city. After several months of quiet conference and organization, announcement was made recently of the purposes of the new organization, and its personnel. Its Board of Directors consists of men active in various aspects of housing and city planning. In addition to this Board there is a representative "steering committee"—presumably fulfilling the functions of the ordinary advisory committee—on which are represented others whose interest in housing has not been so close in the past but who are interested in public questions that have a bearing upon the problems involved. While there are some notable omissions from these lists, they may be said, on the whole, to represent quite comprehensively the various groups in New York City who may be looked to for successful effort in this field in the future.

The purposes of the newly organized Housing Association, as stated in their first announcement, includes the co-ordination of existing housing groups. The new Association, will by study and action, including financial support, formulate a new programme of housing



betterment on a city-wide scale, and stimulation will be given to building enterprises under state and city housing laws.

Among the major purposes of the new Association, are the removal of "blighted districts" through slum clearance and new construction, the prevention of the creation of new slums, the enforcement of existing housing laws and through legislation the raising of housing standards.

Through a subsidiary corporation to be known as the "Housing Foundation"—which it is expected will be eventually capitalized at several million dollars—low-cost housing enterprises and experimental demonstrations will be promoted.

Although having no delusions as to the difficulties of the task that confronts them, the Association hopes in time to make New York City a city of model housing for low-income groups and white-collar workers—as well as for the higher paid elements of the laboring classes.

The officers of the new Association are Alfred E. Smith, President, Mrs. Mary G. Schonberg, Secretary, Dr. Ransom L. Hooker, Treasurer. The executive committee is composed of Alexander M. Bing, Stanley Isaacs, Harold S. Buttenheim, George B. Ford, Clarence H. Holmes, H. H. Murdock, and Miss Rosalie Manning. Temporary offices of the Association are at 331 Madison Avenue.

## HOUSING EFFORT IN NEW YORK

### THE STATE HOUSING BOARD'S WORK

An interesting discussion of certain aspects of the housing problem as it is found in New York—more particularly New York City—will be found in the Report of the New York State Board of Housing recently published.

This Report discusses at considerable length the workings of the Housing Law under which the Housing Board functions, particularly with regard to the creation of limited-dividend companies whose purpose is to build low-cost housing under the law and the supervision of the State Housing Board, with exemption of taxation of the buildings as the principal feature of its operation, and the control of rents and fixing of certain standards by the State.

The Report is particularly valuable in the details that it gives of these various enterprises, and cites some figures that it makes available with regard to some of the fundamentals involved in modern large-scale housing.

Among these may be cited a series of tables, designated as "Controllable Cost Variables in Housing Construction", showing the cost of land per square foot of floor area, if the amount of land occupied is reduced by specified percentages for buildings of different heights on land of different prices. These facts are shown for 4-story, 5-story and 6-story buildings, for land ranging in price from \$1 to \$10 per square foot, where the amount of land occupied ranges from 50% to 55% of the lot to a coverage of 50% to 60%, and finally of 50% to 70%. Similar tables are given showing the additional cost of the land per room instead of per square foot under these varying conditions, and the increase in the monthly rent per square foot of floor area resulting therefrom, as well as the increase in the monthly rent per room under like circumstances.

The Report does not state what plan has been used from which these facts have been deduced—a very material consideration; for the type of plan used might change completely the facts presented. We rather imagine that the plan used has been the latest plan of the Amalgamated Housing Corporation, now building on New York's lower East Side.

Similar tables are presented covering other phases of the subject particularly the cost of automatic elevators in 6 story non-fireproof buildings on land of different prices. These show the approximate cost of such elevator service, the estimated additional rent per room per month necessary to cover that cost, and the savings in monthly cost per room due to an increased height of from 4 stories to 6 stories.

The Report also contains a section dealing with existing housing conditions in New York and pointing out the extent to which blighted areas have developed particularly on the lower East Side, calling attention to the number of rear tenements still occupied, the difficult element of absentee ownership, and pointing out prospects of improvement. Similar studies are made of other parts of the greater city; particular attention is called to the conflagration hazard in the Borough of Queens because of the great amount of wooden construction; and to the lack of law enforcement of the tenement house laws both by the Tenement House Department and by the courts.

Reference is made to a Housing Code, that the Board has prepared for consideration by various municipalities in New York State, but a copy of this code is not included in the Report.

All in all, the Report is a valuable and helpful document and students of housing in other cities will find it advantageous to obtain a copy; this can be obtained from George Gove, Secretary, 949 Broadway, New York City, upon request.

## WHEN IS A LUXURY?

Referring to the model apartments that are being constructed on the lower East Side of New York, *Housing* in a recent issue, makes the following comment:

When one learns that these new buildings, though only 6 stories high, are to be provided with automatic electric elevators, with electric refrigeration for each apartment, as well as steam heat, hot and cold running water in several places in each apartment, hard wood floors, electric light and every modern convenience of living, one wonders whether tax exemption for that class of building is either warranted or desirable.

This comment in *Housing* offers opportunity to present some of the results of the experience and studies of the State Board of Housing with reference to the cost of modern conveniences that have been introduced into housing projects under the N. Y. State Housing Law. With respect to each of them preliminary studies demonstrated economies that justified their use, and these economies have been proven by subsequent experience.

The first of these so-called luxuries is the electric elevator. In considering the electric elevator, it must be borne in mind that not a few years ago walk-up tenements 6 and 7 stories in height were considered as perfectly in order for people of small means. Today the tendency is distinctly away from the higher walk-up buildings. The State Housing Board does not favor any buildings higher than 5 stories unless equipped with elevators. Even in the case of 5-story walk-up construction, the Board requires that the project show in its set-up a satisfactory margin to allow a reduced schedule of rents for apartments in the upper stories. The necessity for this safeguard is confirmed by the experience of commercial builders, many of whom contend that future walk-up buildings should not exceed 4 stories in height.

If it can be shown that dwellings with automatic elevators can be operated even more cheaply than walk-up apartments with fewer stories, then the luxury argument loses its force. It becomes wholly irrelevant.

The cost of elevator service is a function of several variables. The number of rooms served by one elevator, the cost of the land on which the building is constructed, and the height of the building, are some of the factors to be considered. The latest annual Report of the N. Y. State Board of Housing furnishes tables giving the details of these variations.

Taking for purposes of illustration the dwellings now under construction on the lower East Side, of New York City, let us suppose a 4-story walk-up instead of a 6-story elevator building were erected. On



the basis of \$5 land and a gross floor area per rentable room of 249 square feet, the reduction in rent as the result of building 2 additional stories would amount to \$1.49 per room. This is more than the cost of the elevator service. The following table shows the net difference in rent per room per month between a 4-story walk-up and a 6-story elevated structure with rooms averaging 200 square feet floor area and with a plot coverage of 50 per cent.

NET RENT DIFFERENCES PER ROOM PER MONTH BETWEEN 4-STORY WALK-UP  
AND 6-STORY AUTOMATIC ELEVATOR STRUCTURES.

Cost of Land per Square Foot	Net Difference <sup>(1)</sup> When One Elevator is Provided for				
	100 rooms	130 rooms	160 rooms	190 rooms	220 rooms
\$1	+\$0.63	+\$0.37	+\$0.21	+\$0.10	+\$0.01
2	+ 0.42	+ 0.16	— 0.01	— 0.12	— 0.20
3	+ 0.21	— 0.06	— 0.22	— 0.33	— 0.42
4	+ 0.01	— 0.26	— 0.43	— 0.54	— 0.62
5	— 0.20	— 0.47	— 0.64	— 0.76	— 0.84
6	— 0.42	— 0.69	— 0.86	— 0.97	— 1.06
7	— 0.63	— 0.90	— 1.07	— 1.19	— 1.27
8	— 0.84	— 1.12	— 1.29	— 1.40	— 1.49
9	— 1.05	— 1.33	— 1.50	— 1.62	— 1.71
10	— 1.27	— 1.54	— 1.72	— 1.84	— 1.92

(1) Difference between cost of elevator service and saving effected by increasing number of stories from 4 to 6. Plus sign denotes higher cost in 6-story elevator structure than in 4-story walk-up; minus sign denotes lower cost in 6-story elevator structure.

Even if a 5-story walk-up were constructed on land costing \$5 a square foot, the rents in the 6-story elevator building, if each elevator is to serve 160 rooms, would amount to only 18 cents per room per month additional. This excess cost of 18 cents per room per month is more than counterbalanced by the savings resulting from the elimination of dumbwaiters, which are found unnecessary in elevator buildings. Dumbwaiters require service. In a single or double perimeter building extending over a square block, the cost of servicing dumbwaiters adds materially to the maintenance cost of the building.

Another so-called "luxury" is electric refrigeration for each apartment. Obviously, it is not contended that the cost of maintaining an electric refrigerator is more than the cost of buying ice. Undoubtedly the original capital cost of equipment is intended. In projects under the State Housing Law it has been customary to allow to each tenant the cost of an ordinary wooden ice-box toward the purchase of an electric refrigerator. This is done to avoid the dirt, wear and tear on the building of daily ice deliveries. In most cases the tenants are glad to seize the opportunity.

As for steam heat, hot and cold running water, and electric light, it is difficult to conceive that anyone familiar with conditions in the cold water flats in New York, should advocate that they be perpetuated under the State Housing Law. The cold water flat is a heritage of the past, quite as much as the idea that modern conveniences and labor-saving devices are still in the category of luxuries.\*

GEORGE GOVE

Secretary, New York State Board of Housing.

## REVISING NEW YORK'S NEW MULTIPLE DWELLING LAW

The New York Multiple Dwelling Law was enacted by the legislature of 1929 to replace in the City of New York the tenement house law of 1901. It had been framed after two years of work by a Commission appointed by the legislature and the Governor. The tenement house law had served its purpose well but was regarded by many as requiring revision in certain important phases because of changes in living conditions.

The tenement house law defined a tenement house as a building in which three or more families lived independently of each other and did their own cooking on the premises. In the early days of the law cooking was done on coal ranges or coal stoves. When it became possible to cook with gas and electricity it became more and more difficult to enforce the law. Houses were altered and new houses were built for occupancy by three or more families in which cooking was not lawful but in which it became habitual.

The Multiple Dwelling Law changed the definition by omitting the provision for cooking. Any house is a multiple dwelling in which three or more families live independently of each other. This involved much larger jurisdiction by the Tenement House Department and also involved a more elaborate law covering not only what heretofore were known as tenement houses but also apartment hotels, hotels, lodging houses, and single-family houses which had been or were hereafter converted into dwellings for three or more families living independently.

There was an insistent demand that greater height be permitted for fireproof buildings. The tenement house law limited the height to

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*\* It is to be regretted that Mr. Gove does not discuss the main issue raised by Housing, viz, whether thousands of citizens should be compelled against their will to pay for such conveniences as electric refrigeration and electric elevators—which they themselves cannot afford—to be enjoyed by a limited group who claim that they are so poor that they must ask others to pay their taxes for them. It is of no moment whether such conveniences are called “luxuries” or “necessities”.—Editor.*

one and one-half times the width of the street at the building line and allowed a pent house set back from the building line. The Multiple Dwelling Law allows a height limited to one and one-half times the width of the street at the building line and above that point an additional height of one-quarter the width of the street plus 3 feet if set back in the ratio of 1 to 3, and a pent house.

To compensate for this increased height and for the improvement of conditions, yards and courts were increased by about 25%. Towers were allowed not exceeding 3 times the width of the street in height on a plot of not less than 30,000 square feet and covering not more than 20% of the plot, distant from the nearest lot line not less than 70 feet. If there is more than one tower, the towers must be separated by a space equal to the width of the abutting wall. There are two tower buildings now in course of construction on Central Park West, but the number of such buildings is not likely to be great, as it is not practicable to build them unless the building fronts on a street 100 feet wide, and the plot equals 30,000 square feet. Both of these buildings now in course of construction have a frontage of 200 feet on Central Park West and 150 feet or more on the two parallel streets at right angles to Central Park West.

The passage of the law was opposed by the administration of the City of New York. After it was enacted it was attacked in the courts by the City upon the ground that it was enacted in contravention of the home rule provisions of the State constitution. The framers of the law contended that it was a health measure such as might be enacted by the legislature for a single city without violating the constitution. This view was upheld by the highest court of the State, the Court of Appeals, in July last.

One of the provisions of the law, requiring plans to be filed by the owner or by a registered architect, was attacked by an engineer, on the ground that it deprived him of property without due process of law. A few days ago this case was passed upon by the highest court and the law upheld.

In the legislature of 1930 certain amendments were introduced at the request of the former Commissioners who drafted the law—now the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee—mainly to clarify certain provisions and in part to provide for the special needs of college dormitories, Y. M. C. A. lodging houses, and such lodging houses as Mills Hotels. The Mayor appointed a committee to propose amendments, and bills were introduced embodying the views of that committee.



There were but two important respects in which the amendments proposed by the Mayor's Committee were opposed by the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee. The Mayor's Committee adhered to the original contention of the Mayor that in respect to height and bulk the law should be silent, and height and bulk should be regulated by the Zoning Ordinance of the city. The other amendment opposed by the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee was to permit interior bath rooms in houses of 6-stories or less in height. Opposing views were expressed at a hearing before legislative committees at Albany. The opposing forces were urged to accommodate their differences which, thereupon, they attempted to do with much good will.

As the result of numerous conferences an agreement was reached that the Mayor's Committee would not oppose the bills recommended by the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee, and the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee would not oppose certain bills recommended by the Mayor's Committee, but would oppose separate bills containing the matter relating to height and bulk and sanitation. These bills, opposed by the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee, were not enacted. The bills recommended by the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee and such of the bills recommended by the Mayor's Committee as were not opposed by the Multiple Dwelling Law Committee were enacted and signed by the Governor.

It would not be interesting to any but technical experts to describe these amendments in detail. It is sufficient to say that in certain minor respects conditions in old-law tenements houses are improved, the Multiple Dwelling Law is adapted satisfactorily to the needs of colleges for dormitories and to Y. M. C. A. requirements and for a good class of lodging houses, and in various particulars the law is clarified and strengthened.

Architects and builders report that they are finding the law flexible and that it encourages a variety of design which stimulates the imagination of the competent architect.

The Tenement House Department has been under-staffed for years. The Multiple Dwelling Law enlarges its jurisdiction and increases its duties. It is evident that the Tenement House Commissioner appreciates the needs of the Department for he has asked for an additional annual appropriation of \$686,260 to enable him to add 303 employees to his staff—a number he estimates as necessary if the new law is to be enforced.

LAWSON PURDY  
New York City

## WASHINGTON'S ALLEYS

A new drive is being made to get rid of the numerous alley houses that have so long been a detriment to the Federal City.

Recently the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, of which Colonel U. S. Grant 3rd is the executive officer, and which has done and is doing such important work in carrying out the L'Enfant plan and developing Washington and its environs along far-reaching and comprehensive lines, employed John Ihlder, housing consultant, to prepare a Report with regard to the alley houses of Washington.

There is probably no one in the country so well fitted for undertaking this work as Mr. Ihlder, because of his long personal contact with this particular problem in the city of Washington, running back for many years. Mr. Ihlder's Report, made the latter part of April, has recently been made public in multigraph form, and a Bill has been introduced in Congress to carry out its recommendations.

The Report discusses such subjects as "The Elimination of Alley Dwellings", "A Proposed Act Dealing with Alley Dwellings in the District of Columbia"; and has as appendixes, a "Bibliography of the Movement in Washington", a "Statement of Death Rates in Alley Houses and Street Dwellings", a "Summary Report on Vacant Street Houses", a "Summary Report on Present Conditions in 126 Inhabited Alleys", "Sample Schedules Used in Assembling Data on the Inhabited Alleys", "Housing Trusts in America", and a "History of the Inhabited Alleys".

As can be seen from this statement, the Report is a comprehensive one, having at the same time the merit of being a brief one. All communities faced with the problem of Alley Dwellings will find it advantageous to obtain a copy of this Report from Mr. Ihlder at Granite Building, Pittsburgh.

The Bill as introduced in Congress (S4148; H. R. 11047), which at the time of going to press had not been enacted into law, places upon the President of the United States the duty of discontinuing the use as dwellings of buildings situated in alleys in the District of Columbia. With that end in view it authorizes him to purchase or acquire by condemnation or gift, lands, buildings and structures that may be situated in or adjacent to any inhabited alley in the District, with such other property as may be necessary for the carrying out of a proper and comprehensive scheme of re-platting and improvement of such areas. He is empowered also to re-plat any land acquired under the Act, to lease or manage buildings that may be erected upon it, and to aid in

securing the erection of such buildings—for which a revolving fund is provided. These buildings are to be erected by limited-dividend corporations, who under the Act are limited to a return of 6% on the money invested. No loans on the property involved may be made at less than 5%.

The United States Housing Corporation—which was created during the War to speed up the production of workingmen's dwellings in connection with munition factories and ship-building and other industrial centers; and which still exists, through chiefly as a holding corporation—may be called into co-operation by the President and used by him as the agency for carrying the Act into effect, if it seems to him desirable.

Before the plans elaborated can be carried out, they must be submitted for the approval of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, as well as of other governmental agencies in the District, including the District Commissioners. The Act appropriates the sum of \$3,000,000 to be used as a revolving fund to carry out its purposes. Interest at 4% upon this fund, shall be deducted from it at the close of each fiscal year and paid into the United States Treasury.

The proponents of this measure have deliberately allowed a period of 10 years in which to get rid of Washington's alley dwellings. It was evidently felt that to attempt to remove them all at once would entail much hardship and that such a proposal would presumably not commend itself to Congress.

The Bill provides that after July 1st, 1940, it shall be unlawful to use or occupy any alley dwelling as a dwelling in the District of Columbia.

The chief point of criticism that we have of this measure, is found in this provision. While it is, of course, a wise policy not to attempt to destroy all of Washington's alley dwellings immediately, and to proceed gradually to get rid of these bad conditions without suddenly displacing a large population that would have difficulty in finding equivalent accommodation elsewhere, it seems to us unfortunate that the framers of this Bill should have allowed a definite period of 10 years to elapse before any property owner can be compelled to vacate the property which the Bill contemplates shall be vacated.

A better method would have been to have provided in the Act that all existing alley dwellings shall cease to be inhabited as rapidly as may be feasible—without undue hardship to the present tenants, and the owners of the property—and to have vested in an administrative board the power to carry out the provisions of the Act, including the



determination of how quickly individual alley dwellings should be vacated, with a proviso that the entire scheme shall be carried out within 10 years.

Such a method of procedure would have brought about the results desired and would have met the desire not to proceed too rapidly and cause undue hardship, yet at the same time it would not—as the present Act does—have permitted individual property owners to hold up the whole scheme for 10 years, because of their opposition to removing from their present locations or giving up their present holdings.

We think also that the requirement that no alley dwelling shall hereafter be constructed in the District, nor any existing building be so used, is somewhat drastic, in view of the definition of an alley dwelling as one fronting upon or having its principal means of ingress from an alley—which under the terms of the Bill is defined as a thoroughfare less than 30 feet wide at any point.

There must be many alleys in Washington that are entirely habitable and furnish an excellent place in which to live.

It is not without its significance that the latest plan of housing—that has been hailed all over the country as representing the most advanced ideas—that of Radburn, the “Town for the Motor Age”—is almost entirely based upon the use of dead-end alleys or the so-called “cul-de-sac” treatment.

Many of England’s Garden Cities are similarly organized with narrow cul-de-sac streets through which traffic never passes and which are solely service streets, giving access to the houses in which people live and having no other use.

It is probably not likely that this measure will pass at the present session of Congress. In that event we hope that the sponsors of this Bill will give careful consideration to these suggestions.

## 1283 MILES OF PHILADELPHIA HOMES

Some years ago one of those enthusiasts who from time to time enter the housing field was very much bitten with an idea that he called “Roadtown”. An idea which has since been developed in Spain where it is known as the “Linear City”. The scheme consisted of having all cities stretch out in long streets like railroad tracks, with the houses built along them, instead of having cities radiate or extend in curved lines or even in the hated grid-iron fashion that we are most familiar with. We never expected to see any great community developed along such lines—and we do not now expect to ever see that day arrive—but

we have recently had the opportunity of contemplating what such a city would look like, in imagination at least.

A Philadelphia realtor looking upon his own community and finding it good, recently asked his fellow citizens whether they realized to what extent Philadelphia was a real city of homes, pointing out that that city possessed 423,000 individual homes—a greater number, he claimed, than exist in three important western states and more individual homes than are to be found in any other city on the face of the earth.

Employing that statistical method which is so characteristic of America, he assumed the average frontage of the ordinary Philadelphia home to be 16 feet, and suggested that if these homes were placed side by side, there would be an unbroken line of Philadelphia homes 1283 miles long, stretching way out to St. Paul on the West, as far south as Miami, Florida and as far North as St. Johns, Newfoundland; that it would take the fastest train on the Pennsylvania Railroad pulling out of Broad Street Station a day and a half to run past this unbroken line of Philadelphia homes.

All of these are situated in the city itself without crowding; for, as he points out, throughout the city's area of 130 square miles there are more than 100 beautiful parks and squares, serving as breathing spaces for a happy and contented people.

We have never contemplated "Roadtown" or the "Linear City" as developing to this extent, and we frankly confess that we are glad that we never have—1283 miles of Philadelphia homes in an unbroken line, desirable though these homes are, is a horrific thought!

## TEACHING HOUSING TO SCHOOL CHILDREN

A plan for instruction in housing for boys and girls in the upper school grades through a 3-week period has recently been worked out by the Cincinnati Better Housing League and Mrs. Irene D. Cornwell, Director of the Civic and Vocational League. It is believed by the officials of the Better Housing League that there is much to be gained by having boys and girls familiar with the essentials of good housing and instructed in the ways and means by which they can help to maintain rented properties in good condition. For the past 8 or 10 years various types of instruction in housing has been given in the public schools. Each year it has varied somewhat from the plan used the preceding year.

Bleecker Marquette, Executive Secretary of the Better Housing League stated recently that "the carrying out of this plan for such instruction is subject to official approval by the school authorities, who

have indicated their interest and desire to cooperate but have not yet had an opportunity to pass upon the detailed plan." Mr. Marquette further stated that "to the best of his knowledge no such course of instruction is given in any other school system in the United States."

Among the questions that eighth-grade pupils will be expected to answer at the end of this project are,

- 1—What are the various types of dwellings most commonly in use in Cincinnati?
- 2—What is the difference between a Building Code, a Housing Code, a Zoning System and a City Plan?
- 3—What are the most common housing evils?
- 4—What departments of the city government do housing work and what did they accomplish last year?
- 5—What is the name of the social agency that does housing work?  
What is its function and where does it secure its funds?  
What did it accomplish during 1929?
- 6—Why is good housing important?
- 7—What are the responsibilities of the landlord and of the tenant?
- 8—How can boys and girls help in improving housing conditions?

Informational data covering all of these points and many others has been prepared by Miss Ethel Ideson, Assistant Secretary of the League, and by Mr. Marquette and will be available for teachers in all of the classes entering into the project.

Included in this statement\* is the following, covering the subject as to what boys and girls can do to help:

After boys and girls decide what they want in the way of a home, the next step is to form the habit of caring for the home they now have and making themselves responsible for certain household tasks, such as clean yards, scrubbed steps and shining windows that give a homelike look to the houses. Mothers with large families often are much overworked and find it quite impossible to keep their rooms orderly and clean, if the older boys and girls are careless and untidy and do not lend a hand. These tasks can be performed cheerfully, putting some fun into it, and trying to excel so that no one could do the work any better. In this way they will be prepared and ready to keep their own homes in good condition when they get them and the work will not be a burden but a pleasure. Good citizenship begins at home. Helping out in the home is the first step in the development of the civic-minded boy or girl who later in life is prepared to help keep his city clean, orderly and well governed.

As part of the undertaking, a plan has been worked out whereby two boys and girls, elected from each class, will be taken on trips to see good housing—one group going to Mariemont the Garden Village near Cincinnati and another group to the Model Homes Company in Cincinnati. Arrangements have been made for an ice cream party and a movie at the end of these trips.

This educational movement holds within it great promise for a better citizenship and a better city.

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\* A limited supply of this statement and the questions used can be had on application to the Better Housing League, 312 West 9th St., Cincinnati.



## THE "ECONOMIC" HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS

W. C. Clark, economist, and J. L. Kingston\*, architect, have published the results of a carefully worked-out study of what they call the question of the economic height of building. In the main it is a study of economic height on a plot of a given price or value and of a size suitable only for high buildings.

The Report has been prepared with the aid of competent experts and is of value as a study of separate features in building construction under the conditions prescribed for themselves by the authors. The fact that we question its findings in certain respects does not mean that we fail to recognize its merits as a contribution to the discussion of a limited phase of the problem of economic height of buildings.

One of the greatest services rendered by the authors is in demonstrating that land prices of \$200 or more per foot cannot be economically justified, as a rule, unless where the land can be assembled in sufficiently large plottage to enable buildings of 63 stories to be erected over 100% of the plottage. They expose the "economic fallacy" that it will pay to erect low buildings on land that is suitable for offices and has risen in price on the basis of the right to erect skyscrapers.

What is gained from this exposure is difficult to see, except that it clearly demonstrates the fact that high land prices have become the major cause of high building. We agree that it is waste of time and impertinent to say that skyscrapers do not pay, and that this question is settled by the fact that responsible financiers and builders go on erecting them.

### N. Y.'s WHOLE POPULATION COULD BE HOUSED ON MANHATTAN ISLAND

Because they do pay does not prove that skyscrapers are necessarily sound from a true economic standpoint. It would be possible to demonstrate, for example, that the whole population of New York City could have working space and residence within Manhattan Island, that this would pay the owners of land in the Island, and that once the land prices were adjusted to this degree of concentration, any lesser density would not pay the property owners. But who would suggest this as an economic proposition from the point of view of the city and owners of property as a whole.

### THE STUDY HAS A RESTRICTED VALUE

To answer the simple proposition as to what height of building pays best on land of a given value, on a given area, and under known

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\* *The Skyscraper* by W. C. Clark and J. L. Kingston. American Institute of Steel Construction, Inc., N. Y. C., 159 p., \$2.

zoning restrictions, is helpful to builders, but it adds little to knowledge of true economics in connection with building heights and densities. It was unnecessary to make this study in order to show that when land prices reach \$100 or \$200 or more per square foot that intensive development is essential. The specific site selected in this case is priced at \$200 per foot. It was also of "sufficient size to give a fair chance to demonstrate whether under any conditions a very tall building was economically justifiable". On page 11 it is stated that "the only stipulations" governing the choice of a plot were its high land value and its being large enough to give a high building a *fair chance*. But obviously this gave the low building an *unfair chance*. The plot chosen was 204 x 405 feet. To assemble such a lot might alone increase the price from 20 to 50% above prices of individual lots. It would mean in most cases the destruction of valuable buildings as a heavy item of cost. Direct underground passage with the Grand Central Terminal was assumed, yet only exceptional sites could have such an advantage.

It is not surprising that the conditions laid down by the authors led to the conclusion that 63 stories was the economic height. The report indicates that, with a land value of \$200 per square foot, representing a total cost in each case of \$16,200,000, the returns would gradually increase from 4.22% on an 8-story building to 10.25% on a 63-story building, with a slight falling off to 10.06% on a 75-story building. These percentages represent net returns. The cost of building varies from \$4,769,000 for 8 stories to \$19,390,000 for 63 stories.

With land prices at \$100 per square foot, the net returns vary from 8.29% at 8 stories to 14.10% at 63 stories, the progression being gradually up. After 63 stories the returns fall to 13.50% for 75 stories. It is noteworthy that in both the above cases the greater increase of return per story occurs between an 8-story and a 15-story building. The increase on the yield at \$200 per foot between 8 and 15 stories is 2.22%, which compares with 2.06% increase between 15 and 30 stories, 1.37% between 30 and 50 stories and .38 of one % between 50 and 63 stories.

Similarly, on \$100 per foot land the yield increases 2.76% between 8 and 15 stories, 2.05% between 15 and 30 stories, .94 of one % between 30 and 50 stories and .6 of one % between 50 and 63 stories.

#### THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF HIGH LAND COSTS AND HIGH BUILDINGS

A 75-story building is not an economic height, even on land priced at \$400 per square foot, although it yields the highest percentage return of 6.33% on such land. As the authors admit, "the high cost of land is the dominating one" and this high cost is based in large part on the expensive process of assembling 81,000 square feet—as if this were

necessary for an 8-story building. The assembling process might increase their estimate, they say, to \$300; but "an underestimate of the cost of land would redound to the disadvantage of the higher buildings". Here we have the crux of the matter. Great heights are necessary owing to high land prices; and the higher the prices the higher the building must go.

A great defect in the Report is the implied assumption first, that because a 63-story building requires 81,000 feet of area to be financially successful, therefore buildings of smaller height require this area; and, second, that the high cost of assembling plottage in areas of the highest value represents a normal condition. The effect of these assumptions is to burden buildings of from 8 to 15 stories with the cost of plottage over 30 times the size they require. Buildings of such heights can be erected on 2500 feet without destroying valuable existing buildings, and with no cost for assembling.

The authors recognize but underestimate the fact that in the areas where the 63-story buildings are appropriate, assembly of plottage is most difficult and expensive. Obviously, it is in such areas that good building already exists and owners are most extravagant in their demands. Yet they burden the 8 and 15-story building with a cost of land equal to that of the 63-story building. In the case of the former we have a land cost of \$17,302,000 assignable to land; and only \$4,891,000 assignable to building.

What this proves is only that normally an 8-story building should not be erected on land worth \$200 for a 63-story building. At \$100 per foot an 8-story building would yield 8.29% and a 15-story building 11.05%, as against 14.10% for a 63-story building. The authors do not give the figures for less than \$100 per square foot, although in Manhattan only small areas of land are assessed at \$50 and more per foot.

It is noteworthy that the profits of building are highest where the land prices are lowest in all buildings. With prices at \$50 or less per square foot the picture would be entirely changed. Thus at \$50 the 8-story building would have an assignable land value of \$4,325,500, as against a building value of \$4,891,000; which would put it approximately in the same class as to ratio of cost of land and building as the 63-story building on land costing \$200. It would probably not be unfair to assume a possible case in which the cost of a small lot—occupied by a depreciated structure—for a 15-story building would be so much less than the cost of assembling an abnormally large site (occupied to a considerable extent by existing 20 and 30-story buildings), for a 63-story building as to wipe out most of the economic advantage claimed for the latter.



It is unfortunate that the investigation did not permit this probability or numerous others to be tested, so that the result would have been fair to all building heights.

Having seen that the crux of the matter is in land prices we have to face the allegation that "severe deflation of land values" in the small skyscraper areas would lead to "disastrous consequences". One answer is that where values are true values—that is, where they are based on a demand independent of *forced* height of building—they would not suffer deflation by restriction of height to the fullest limit reasonable in the interest of general welfare.

#### HIGH BUILDINGS IN ONE AREA DISCRIMINATE AGAINST LAND VALUES ELSEWHERE

Again, when inflation results from pyramiding buildings and prices of land in a few small areas this is discriminatory against property in the large expanse of land outside of them. An 8-story building on a 200-foot lot can provide 9,000,000 square feet of office space, as against 30,000,000 in a 63-story building. If the 30,000,000 instead of 9,000,000 feet is erected on one lot this means that—given a fixed demand—owners of adjacent land lose the opportunity to supply the difference of 21,000,000 feet.

When land values are deflated in one place they are equally inflated in another, given the same demand for building space, and the "disastrous consequences" occur as a result of inequitable distribution of values, rather than from high values in small localities. Those who enjoy extremely localized inflation as a result of excessive bulk of buildings, may, by doing so, cause increased taxation. Taxes that are imposed to meet the cost of waste, such as occurs with congestion, cause real deflation. Well-balanced distribution of building bulks results in well-balanced distribution of land values and benefits the vast majority of owners.

It is apparent from the analysis of Messrs. Clark and Kingston that the high land prices they assume are both caused by and a cause of excessive building density. They say, "If buildings in the Wall Street district or the Grand Central zone were limited to a height of 10 or 20 stories, land values would only be a fraction of what they are at present". Thus they agree that land values are both cause and effect of high building. But they ignore averages, such as that the Wall Street district in 1929 had no greater height than 10.7 stories. The bold statement is made that a more decentralized city will be less efficient and more expensive—a wholly unwarranted assumption if we

think of decentralization in terms of compact building as opposed to overcrowded building, and an efficient degree of concentration as opposed to congestion.

### SPREADING THE CITY TOO WIDE

It is nonsense to say that by reducing bulk in one place and increasing it in another you spread the city too widely and, thereby, increase cost of services. Given the same average height and density, with better distributed bulk than at present, there could be no change in the area served with streets and other improvements. But the distribution being better balanced there is less waste and greater economy. We entirely agree that "inefficient utilization of land means a definite public loss", but we contend that the greatest composite factor in inefficiency is overcrowding in one place and isolated scattering of buildings in another.

It would be wholly erroneous to produce the impression that the authors make any claim that skyscrapers should be erected in any place other than the central business areas, or without regard to the importance of obtaining reasonable sunlight and fresh air. They accept the view that the setback principle should be developed to give reasonable light and air. They also recognize that the low building has the advantage of the high building in the matter of adjusting supply to demand.

It isn't enough to say, however, that these are things to consider. They are part of the cost of erecting buildings higher than can be done on normal lots, and of providing space in larger units than can be adjusted to meet demands. It should be borne in mind that a 63-story building is approaching the maximum bulk that can ever be erected, and that the facilities for access which such a building enjoys when built, may be greatly impaired after it is 20 years old. It will also suffer as much, if not more, than the low building from change of centers.

These facts mean that land value may fall instead of rise as the building depreciates. This has already occurred in some areas. Thus the benefit which the owner of a low building may obtain from appreciation of land value, concurrent with depreciation of building, will probably be lost to the highest building; and this should be a factor in calculating their respective financial returns.

Admitting all that is claimed for the skyscraper as an economic device, this is all the more reason why skyscrapers should not be overcrowded. Everything can be overdone; including ease of contact in business buildings represented by proximity. The factor of time in

movement has to be considered, along with the factor of distance, in order to arrive at the degree of efficient proximity that is best.

In the city these factors relate to three movements:

One, within the business building; one, between different business buildings; and one, between homes and business buildings.

The benefits of the skyscraper are too obvious to need argument, and it is these benefits that need to be conserved by preventing the overdosing of one locality with bulk of building. But the skyscraper does not need special pleading and it suffers in public estimation from overwrought arguments in favor of excessive bulk. Such pleading is used in trying to underestimate the effect of overcrowded building in creating traffic congestion. It is beside the point to argue that cities have always suffered from congestion, or that other cities with lower buildings and narrower streets have congestion. Skyscrapers are not responsible for all kinds of congestion but they contribute in a large degree to the kinds from which New York suffers. The theory that vertical traffic is a substitute for horizontal traffic is based on the erroneous assumption that the occupants of a building do not leave it at the peak hours when congestion exists.

#### THE DANGER OF CONSTRICTING TRAFFIC

The authors show themselves to be fully aware of the many things that need to be done to relieve traffic congestion, but it is patent that they are prepared to impose arbitrary restrictions on traffic itself, while denouncing arbitrary restrictions on building bulks. Yet it is more injurious to a city and its real land values to restrict locomotion than to reasonably restrict buildings. If building bulks are not restricted, locomotion must be restricted to an extent that will do the greater injury to the buildings. We cannot see what the authors have proved that is not already accepted, as regards,

*First*, the economic height of buildings on land of the high value and on large plottage they selected; or,

*Second*, the efficient economic function of the skyscraper.

Nothing in their Report, however, proves that crowded skyscrapers are desirable because individual skyscrapers are desirable; or that excessive bulk of building does not throw an increased monetary burden on the land and cause congestion in addition to that caused by other forces; or that it is necessary to crowd space so much that sunlight and fresh air cannot penetrate buildings; or that permitting high land prices to force higher buildings is a sound economic proposition.



A statement which is prepared, as this is, to show everything favorable to the skyscraper and to reveal the weakness of every argument against it, has great value when its *ex parte* character is recognized.

THOMAS ADAMS  
New York City

## TURNING WATER INTO LAND

### CHICAGO'S OUTER DRIVE

Not "turning water into wine" as recorded in the Bible, but turning water into land is the theme of an interesting book recently published by the Chicago Plan Commission, entitled "The Outer Drive."\*

Beginning in 1919 with the presentation of the Chicago Plan and the formation of the Chicago Plan Commission the shallow lake waters have been gradually filled in and beautified until the lake front is fast becoming one vast park and boulevard—with the exception of that portion lying across the Chicago River.

A plan recently adopted provides for an Outer Drive through Grant Park, north over the Illinois Central tracks to the Chicago River crossing the River and continuing north connecting with the Lake Shore Drive at Ohio Street. The Drive provides four lanes of traffic in each direction and two foot walks.

It will provide an outlet immediately for 20,000 vehicles a day from Michigan Avenue, and it is expected, will handle over 40,000 vehicles a day in a few years. It will complete the most important north-south route in the city and will furnish a Lake Front by-pass to the congested Loop District. For commercial traffic a mezzanine level is provided in the plans, although this will not be built until later. This mezzanine level clears the railroad tracks at such an elevation that the two-level street will aid the quick development of the surrounding territory, since there will be available boulevard service on the upper level, commercial service on the mezzanine level, and railroad service on the lower level.

Students of City Planning problems will find this volume helpful in their work.

E. P. GOODRICH  
New York City

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\* *The Outer Drive, Chicago Plan Commission.*

## A FEDERAL BUILDING LOAN ACT FOR THE UNITED STATES

What the *New York Sun* editorially characterizes as “a proposed venture into pure paternalism” is found in a bill introduced in the House of Representatives a short time ago by Representative Huddleston of Alabama. Under the terms of this voluminous measure of 63 pages, it is proposed to create in the Treasury Department a Federal Board the chief purpose of which is to lend money to build homes. Under the terms of this proposed law, this Board would divide the United States into 12 Districts, in each of which money could be obtained to buy a site, put up a building or liquidate a mortgage on a site or building. A maximum loan of \$10,000 would be obtainable at interest of not over 5% exclusive of amortization charges; annual or semi-annual payments would be required on account of principal, the payment of the loan to be distributed over a period of not more than 40 years.

In order to administer the scheme a series of Regional Loan banks is established with a capital of not less than \$500,000 each. Each of these banks would be authorized to issue bonds for building loans. Shares would be sold at \$5 each, the Treasury taking over all not subscribed for at the end of 30 days. Borrowers would be required to subscribe for stock at a rate of \$5 for each \$100 borrowed, the stock being held as collateral security. Under the bill a virtual army of Federal employes is set up to make the scheme function. Commenting on the plan, the *New York Sun* says:

The proposal is open to the objection that it proposes to put the United States into a business which is already well looked after by private enterprise, amply financed by funds supplied by building and loan associations, savings banks and life insurance companies. If in any section there is need for governmental intervention it ought to be supplied by the State and not by the United States. \*\*\*\*\* Mr. Huddleston's proposal would virtually require the United States to finance purchase of a site and construction of a home for every one who might apply.

We do not understand that there is any considerable likelihood of this measure having favorable consideration by Congress. Its introduction, however, is symptomatic of the views held by some groups in this country.

### THE DECLINE OF THE FAMILY

Is the American Family as a social institution declining? And is the American home likely to vanish?

The statistics with regard to the types of building erected in America in recent years show a constant trend away from what we have heretofore associated as home life, viz., the single-family dwelling, to



more congregate forms of living, such as are exemplified by the multiple dwellings of our great cities. To some it has seemed that this change portended a vital change in the method of living of the American people, and from these facts many have assumed the gradual disappearance of the family as a social institution.

A series of striking facts dealing with this question were presented some months ago in the *New York Times* by Professor William F. Ogburn, Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago.

Emphasizing that it is the functional aspect of social institutions, rather than their structure, that is of importance, Professor Ogburn points out that the family, judged by its past record has done 7 things. He states these 7 functions of the family as follows:

(1) Affectional, (2) economic, (3) educational, (4) protective, (5) recreational, (6) family status, (7) religious.

It is in these functions, he claims, that one must look for evidence of any changes in the family, and says that it is obvious that some of these functions have declined in scope and significance as activities of the family.

Taking up first the economic functions of the family, he adduces the following striking facts:

The output of bakeries in the United States increased 60% from 1914 to 1925 while the population increased less than 15%. From this he concludes that the bakery is doing some of the work of the family kitchen, and that we are living more out of the tin can and the preserving jar than we did in the past. He finds that during this same period the number of persons engaged in canning and preserving fruits and vegetables outside the home, that is in food factories, increased 37% and the product of these factories increased 100%, as compared with an increase of about 15% in the number of families. He finds also that the number of people engaged in the occupation of waiter has increased 4 times as fast as the population since 1900. The number of restaurant keepers has increased during this time 158% while the general population increased only 39% and the urban population but 46%.

He finds in the fact that the number of delicatessen dealers in the United States has increased in number from 1910 to 1920 about 43%, or 3 times as fast as the population, an explanation of why city life discourages marriage. From these figures he deduces the fact that the family is doing less and less in the preparation of food for its members—a conclusion which it would seem cannot be successfully refuted. But economic functions of the family other than feeding it, are also being shifted to outside industries, as he points out. The number



of laundresses not working in laundries decreased by  $\frac{1}{4}$  while the amount of work done in laundries increased by 57% from 1914 to 1925. Similarly, he finds that there is less sewing done in the home. He also finds that in the 20-year period from 1900 to 1920, the number of domestic servants decreased 15%, while the number of families increased about 30%. He does not, however, find that this means that more women were kept at home because of their increased domestic responsibilities; for, 1 out of every 11 married women throughout the United States worked for pay outside the home in the year 1920, while 30 years previous there was only 1 out of 22. He also finds that out of all the women at work outside the home in 1920, 1 out of every 4 was a married woman.

Turning from such practical, commonplace things as feeding the family and keeping it clean, to "higher" things, such as education, Professor Ogburn finds that similar tendencies are visible. He calls attention to the great change that has come in the number of children to be found in homes today as compared with some years ago, pointing out that in the city of Rochester, New York, in 1920, of all the families in that city but 3 out of every 10 were without children living with them. Even when there are children, he finds the homes are developing "substitute parents" for part of the functions of training; for school teachers may be viewed as "part-time parents." Since 1870 he finds that, while real parents have tripled in number, these "substitute parents," or teachers, have increased 6-fold. Not only this but teachers are taking the children away from their parents and from the home for longer periods of time than they did in the past. In 1870 the children were away from the home in school an average of 78 days of the year, in 1926 136 days. He also finds that they are taking them away from their parents at tenderer ages; for, 1 in 6 of the children between 5 and 6 years of age are now in school.

We regret that we have not space for a consideration in detail of this fascinating study, and that we are not able to take our readers through Professor Ogburn's analysis of the changes that have taken place in the family's recreation and in other aspects of family life.

That momentous changes have taken place in the family cannot be gainsaid. Whether these are for better or worse remains to be determined.